



Sustainable transport in European tourism

Category: Workshop

In case of a workshop: Tourist/Leisure/Shopping sector

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The volume of traffic as a result of tourist activities has increased heavily over the last two centuries. With tourists themselves becoming more and more aware of the negative impacts of traffic on their destination area due to pollution, noise, etc. - which impair the recreational value, satisfaction level and the propensity of repeat visits, the issue of the environment is slowly becoming increasingly important for profit-oriented destination managers.

European Leisure Traffic

With regard to size and growth rate, leisure and tourism induced traffic has so far been underestimated. Today activities in the fields of tourism and leisure cause more than 50 percent of the volume of passenger traffic within European countries. European Tourism- and Leisure travel has undergone the same major changes as the general development of the world-wide movement of people stated by the OECD:

- During the 20th century, traffic increased more than hundredfold, while the total human population increased fourfold.
- According to the growth in traffic, its overall impact increased, too (by a factor of 15-20).
- Transport activities have three global environmental impacts: emissions of radiatively active compounds (greenhouse gases, ..), emissions of compounds that thin the stratospheric ozone layer and production of persistent organic pollutants with their negative effects on biological systems.
- Decisive for the negative impact of mobility is the chosen means of transport. Analyses of the most commonly used means of transport show that less than 10 percent of all European tourists use public transport to reach a holiday resort. As far as short holiday breaks are concerned 80 percent arrive with their own car. Travelling distances for longer holidays are covered mostly by car (48%) or plane (47%).
The low use of public means of transport is on the one hand caused by personal factors such as individual resources and the behaviour of friends and on the other hand by the lack of attractive offers.
- From a global point of view travelling to and from the holiday resort accounts for 80 percent of the energy consumption. The energy consumption is regarded as indicator for the harmful effects of traffic. As a consequence effective sustainable traffic management has to begin at the point of departure of a journey.

Projecting current "business as usual" trends, and assuming no major shortages of petroleum products for transport use, in 2030 car ownership and total distance travelled will be up to 200 per cent higher than in 1990.

This general long-term trend concerning the movement of people will be strengthened by some trends in tourism: the overall increase of tourist activities, the decrease of the duration of stay, a concentration on some preferred holiday weeks and a concentration on some preferred holiday destinations. This will lead to an extension of traffic jams and flight delays accompanying the beginning of popular holiday weeks/weekends.

Soft Mobility in Tourism

In the case of soft mobility the term "soft" combines two important aspects: a higher quality and more sustainability in traffic.

Soft mobility describes on the one hand the aim to change the habit of people using their own car towards the use of public transport and on the other hand the aim to raise the acceptance of measures taken to reduce the local traffic. Soft mobility in tourism has only become popular over the last couple of years although studies proved an increasing dissatisfaction among tourists with traffic solutions in tourism resorts since the beginning of 1980.

Nowadays tourists realize that things they are trying to escape from – such as noise, smell, stress – do increasingly reach them in holiday resorts. The negative impacts of traffic on the landscape therefore hold a key-position within the holiday decision process.

What makes soft-mobility successful?

Generally speaking a holiday is a chain of small experiences each of which contribute to the success of a holiday. The success of soft mobility in tourism in particular is guaranteed through an uncomplicated and comfortable journey with public means of transport and through unlimited mobility in the holiday resorts.

As far as the journey is concerned a functioning door-to-door luggage service, optimised changing times and an acceptable prize contribute mainly to the success.

Apart from developing sound traffic offers sustainable traffic management has to put a stress on information campaigns. In many cases tourists simply don't know the alternatives to the use of the car.

With regard to the points mentioned above successful tourism management focusing on soft-mobility and/or car free tourism requires professional network management.

Networking

Therefore between January 1996 and July 1997 a EU-Model-Project focusing on "Soft Mobility in Tourism Destinations" was launched. The working group consisted of 12 destinations and 6 expert organisations from three countries within the European Union (Austria, Germany and Italy). This model project gave the impulse for the foundation of NETS. With the support of NETS - Network for Soft Mobility in European Tourism - the experience gathered in the EU project shall spread and become implemented in the tourism industry. NETS was founded officially by the following six foundation partners: the Association for Soft Mobility (A), the Association for car free tourism in spa destinations (D), the Association of car free tourism destination in Switzerland (CH), FUTOUR, Trafico and the ÖAR-Regional consultancy.

Tourism and Mobility – an European Topic for Sustainable Development

For many guests the protection of landscape and environment influences their decision for a certain holiday destination. Car traffic is one of the most negative factors. In many European countries more than half of private traffic is caused by tourism and leisure activities. Environmentally conscious traffic models are an important pre-requisite for quality tourism. Strategies and activities for sustainable traffic solutions at the holiday destination and for the journey are absolutely necessary.

One of the central targets of the EU-model project "Soft Mobility in Tourism destinations" was exchange of information and establishing an European network. This project, co-ordinated by ÖAR Regional Development Consultancy, was conducted from January 1996 to Summer 1997. Now it is up to NETS - the Network of European Tourism with Soft Mobility - to disseminate the joint experiences and put them into life on the tourism market. NETS also aims to support integrated quality management in tourism. By implementing the necessary steps, quality of life and of environment can be improved on a long term basis in the tourism destinations.

What are the goals of NETS?

NETS wants to be **the** most important network for sustainable mobility in European tourism. The framework conditions are good. For the first time ever partners from **tourism, traffic and environment** are linked within a European tourism network! The main target of NETS is to become the first contact for all matters related to „Soft Mobility in Tourism“ in Europe, not only for members but also for marketing partners and for all persons interested in sustainable quality tourism. Experts of tourism and transport organisations are invited to cooperate and exchange know-how and experience of model projects. Sponsors are welcome to support our endeavors for developing sustainable tourism with soft mobility. Journalists have the possibility to register for regular information about NETS.

The Network wants to approach tourism destinations which see soft mobility as part of quality offers for sustainable tourism development. Furthermore NETS wants to support its network partners and – indirectly – European quality tourism by developing and promoting tourism offers with **soft mobility**. Traffic and tourism concepts should be targeted towards the highest

possible renunciation of polluting factors. The major task is to support network partners by exchange of know-how in developing and realising such concepts. Soft mobility should be reached by supporting pedestrian zones and cycling paths, increasing public transport within the village and for the journey, promoting low-pollutant cars, etc.

With lobbying and public relations for partners of the network as well as establishing a “pressure group – soft mobility” it is possible to support interests of the network partners towards political agents, media and organisations. Competent concepts and practical experiences in traffic planning, train logistics, marketing and finance form the foundation for an intense exchange of know-how for soft mobility in tourism.

Development of NETS

On November 12th 1999 NETS EEIG (European Economic Interest Grouping) was officially founded by the 6 founding partner during the NETS meeting in Saas Fee, Switzerland.

Founding partners are:

- Interessengemeinschaft für Sanfte Mobilität in Österreichs Kur- und Tourismusorten (Association for soft mobility in Austria’s spa- and tourism resorts). Obm. Dr. P. Brandauer, Werfenweng
- IAKF Interessengemeinschaft für autofreie Kur- und Fremdenverkehrsorte in Bayern e.V., (Association for car free spa- and tourism resorts in Bavary e.V.). Obgm. W. Heitmeier, Bad Reichenhall
- GAST Gemeinschaft Autofreier Schweizer Tourismusorte (Association for car free Swiss tourism destinations) Frank Bumann, Saas Fee
- Dipl.Bw. Peter Zimmer, FUTOUR Umwelt-, Tourismus- und Regionalberatung GmbH&Co.KG (FUTOUR Environment-, Tourism- and Regional Development Corp.)
- DI Helmut Koch, Trafico Verkehrsplanung and
- DI Karl Reiner, Partner of ÖAR-Regional Consultancy (Managing Director)

Apart from the founding organisations there are a number of further partners participating in NETS. Most important partners are – on the one side – tourism destinations who count on soft mobility as a part of quality offer, and on the other soft mobility services, such as train companies. Additionally, the Austrian Ministry for Environment and the Swiss Department for Environment, Woods and Landscape are main supporters of the network. The Netherlands Alpine Platform (NAP) has been a reliable partner since many years.

A major factor for successful realisation is the co-operation of different partners: Partners at the destination such as local tourist boards and external partners such as networks, platforms, public enterprises, ministries, NGO’s and others as well as the project leaders.

NETS is looking for partners in Europe

Participation in NETS as a “NETS-Destination” is possible for tourism destinations and tourist boards which fulfil the given quality criteria. Destinations not fulfilling these criteria but who are interested in know-how exchange and support are considered to be “NETS-Applicants”. Furthermore, NETS co-operates with supporting partners such as train and bus companies, ministries and other partners – organisations which support and implement soft mobility and work within the network.

Realised activities of NETS

Already during the establishing phase PR and communication was emphasised which brought high publicity all over Europe. The project was introduced at many expert’s meetings and tourism fairs. Many press releases and articles in specialised newspapers wrote about the establishment and activities of NETS.

A major communication platform for internal and external communication is the NETS homepage. Information about NETS can be obtained at www.soft-mobility.com. Links to relevant homepages have been installed.

NETS puts high efforts in "Marketingservice". This is supporting the development of market specific holiday packages like "Holiday from the Car" or a multi-lateral marketing research for clear definition of target groups or even the establishment of contacts to travel agencies during a co-operation workshop at the ITB 1999 in Berlin. Further interesting NETS-projects are currently being developed, such as a research on "soft-mobile offers" in NETS destinations and clarification of market acceptance.

NETS was already awarded a price at the competition "Gut Angekommen (Arrived well)" 1999 by the Austrian Ministry of Traffic and VCÖ (Verkehrsclub Österreich) for its realised and planned projects.

For 2000 NETS participated at the mobility fair at Bodensee and a realisation-workshop "soft-mobility offers" with the community Uhdlingen-Mühlhofen.

Co-operation with marketing partners

A major partner for NETS are travel agencies and other marketing partners. 1999 a travel workshop has been held in co-operation with Salzburger Land Tourismus GmbH and the Netherlands Alpine Platform (NAP) for travel agents and their employees from Holland. "Green" offers for the model communities of Werfenweng and Bad Hofgastein as well as the National Park of Hohe Tauern have been introduced and contacts to the outgoing market of Holland have been established.

At the ITB 1999 in Berlin a co-operation work shop between TUI Holland and the NAP was held. It is regarded a great success as definite co-operation agreements between travel agents from the Netherlands and Alpine Destination could be signed.

By means of targeted PR-activities, NETS will again make efforts to exchange experiences and carry out lobbying for its partners: A NETS-exhibition stand at the ITB 2002, hall "Travel with Sense", and a Co-operation exchange will be organized together with NAP and VISIT (www.yourvisit.info).

For 2002, NETS has chosen the topic Railways and travelling by train as part of the supply chain of the product 'car-free holidays' (Railway+). Results will be published at the annual meeting in september.

Resumee

Traffic related to tourism and leisure activities increases at above-average rates and its negative side-effects such as traffic jams, air and noise pollution destroy the attraction of many holiday resorts. Since the volume of traffic is predicted to raise over the following years sustainable traffic management will become crucial for the success of tourist destinations. In the long-term destinations failing to implement such sustainable traffic solutions will be on the losing side.

Within the scope of the Austrian EU-Presidency a European Forum for Sustainable Mobility in Tourism was held in Badhofgastein in 1998. The conference resulted in some recommendations for a future traffic management:

- The principles of sustainable development should be implemented through traffic-, tourism- and environmental policies. The basis of policies should be Kyoto-targets, "Klimabündnis", EU-Environmental Action Programmes and Strategy of Integration, Convention of the Alps, National Environmental Plans, etc.
- Fair financial conditions imposed on traffic such as internalisation of external costs (costs due to health and environmental effects from accidents, noise, air pollution, climate impacts and others).
- The changing to optimal traffic technologies and alternative means of transport with reduced emissions.
- An increased standard of quality through environmental friendly mobility providing high value to the destination, with regular quality checks.

Supported by the European Union, national, regional and local organisations numerous holiday resorts have already made some considerable efforts finding solutions to these traffic problems.