



Who knows what it is?

The perception of CSR and certification in tourism – an investigative study of the TOURcert certificate.

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Abstract

The purpose of the current thesis was to investigate on the one hand why tour operators engage in Corporate Social responsibility (CSR), got CSR certified with the TOURcert certificate and what the implications for them and consumers are. On the other hand the expectation of potential consumers concerning CSR and certified tour operators were investigated in order to find out to what extent they matched with the tour operator's point of view. With the intention to search for possible compliances or contradictions according to the theoretical framework, ten qualitative interviews in a comparable design with multiple case study elements were done. Five of them were done with TOURcert certified tour operators and the others were done with five potential consumers who are interested in CSR related travel products. Because of the fact that nowadays there is a change in the lifestyle of people in the direction of buying "greener" products and focusing more on sustainability, it is assumed that they purchase more sustainable and responsible products in the tourism sector as well. In the thesis the concept of CSR and its meaning for tourism was discussed as well as the consumer behaviour in connection to CSR. Furthermore the function of certification, especially in tourism, was considered in order to get an impression if a certificate could influence the consumer behaviour and the decision making process in the case of CSR certified tour operators. Through the interviews with the potential consumers the thesis indicated that consumers generally trust certificates, but it was never a crucial criterion in the final decision making process. It functioned more as a quality indicator or a tool to filter information, because of the information overflow through the internet. Nevertheless the study illustrated that consumers are open minded to CSR related travel products as an appealing form of travelling in future. That means from the consumer's perspective the assumption for increasing sales are given. Tour operators decided to get certified, because they were looking for documentation of their work and that the public could recognize that they were doing things differently than other tour operators. Furthermore the certification process demonstrated a lot of possible improvements for them regarding internal procedures in order to work more efficient and save cost. However, all interviewed tour operators claimed that they expected a higher amount of brand awareness through the certificate and that they can use the certificate

successfully as a marketing tool. But this effect did not occur. Therefore the results indicated that the tour operators as well as the certification body had to increase the awareness of the certificate in order to benefit from the certificate in a marketing perspective, because many consumers did not recognize or even know the certificate as well as travel offers, which are based on CSR. It was also discovered that it is difficult to answer the question, if a certified tour operator could fulfill the customers' expectations, because of their different understandings of CSR. Furthermore the TOURcert certificate is quite new and that means it might be difficult to evaluate all implications of the certificate in such a short period of time.

1. Introduction

In 2011 international tourist arrivals reached a total of 980 million up from 939 million in 2010, in a year characterized by a slow global economic recovery, major political changes in the Middle East and North Africa and natural disasters in Japan (UNWTO, 2012). Despite persistent economic uncertainty, tourist arrivals in Europe reached 503 million, accounting for 28 million of the 41 million additional international arrivals worldwide (UNWTO, 2012). The sector has become one of the driving forces of global employment, economic security and social well-being of the 21st century (Rifai, 2012). It is indisputable that foreign travel provides jobs and perspectives especially in economic peripheral regions and developing countries (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). Furthermore, today in the face of a multitude of global challenges, from persistently high poverty rates to job shortages the world needs the energy that tourism generates (Rifai, 2012). Together with the opportunities of job creation and development generated by tourism, the pressing challenges of sustainability and responsibility arise (Rifai, 2012).

The booming travel activities have tremendous consequences: Holiday flights heat up the global climate: the demands made by guests on the destinations strengthen conflicts about land, water and increase the pressure on the ecosystems (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). It is well- documented that mismanaged tourism development can have negative impacts on the environment and the risks of over development and over exploitation of natural resources are real and cannot be ignored (Rifai, 2012). The positive news, however, is that sustainable tourism is rapidly assuming greater importance among everybody who is involved in tourism and it becomes now the rule rather than the exception (Rifai, 2012).

In nowadays post modern travellers moved away from mass tourism products, they want to believe that their use of tourism facilities and their presence in tourist destinations will not damage the resources they visit and embrace the promises offered by tourism companies (Font, 2001). The development of direct selling, the increase in specialist tour operators and the consolidation of independent travel has provided the platform for tourism consumers to look for

alternative holiday concepts (Font, 2001). Because of the fact that the public is more interested and more sensitive about environmental issues a growing number of consumers is willing to choose greener products (Font, 2001). That means for tour operators focusing on environmental issues might be one of the key tools to gain competitive advantage and a common element of segmenting, targeting and positioning strategies (Font, 2001). However, the increasing number of green marketing claims in tourism has raised the basic question if there are any methods to ensure the validity of such claims (Font, 2001). Hand in hand with this increasing demand for sustainable tourism and ecotourism products, greenwashing criticisms has become up to date (Goodwin & Francis, 2003) and therefore consumers need a helpful tool to evaluate how credible the information are which they get from the company. In the author's point of view such a tool could be a certificate or a label.

A label is simply a description of something, associated with it in some way so that a potential purchaser or user can obtain information from it rather than the object itself (Buckley, 2002). *“Labels may be spoken or written, text or image, brief or extensive, fixed or detachable, accurate or inaccurate, reliable or misleading, local or global, one-off or systematic”* (Buckley, 2002, p. 184). They may contain information only from owners or vendors, or from third parties such as independent certification agencies (Buckley, 2002). Certification has emerged over the past 15 years as a way to differentiate environmentally or socially preferable products from their conventional alternatives, and it now encompasses numerous complex issues, from labour and production processes to end-use considerations (National Research Council, 2010).

Ecolabels, certification and environmental accreditation are controversial topics in tourism (Buckley, 2002). Tour operators use them in marketing, land management agencies in allocating operating permits, government agencies in promoting national interests, and ecotourism associations for education, lobbying, and revenue generation (Buckley, 2002). While environmental groups support some and reject others, all these players hope that individual consumers pay attention (Buckley, 2002).

Currently, in the tourism industry exist more than 100 quality labels worldwide (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). Trustworthy quality labels can be an important indicator in

the decision making process, because the consumer might learn more about the companies' sustainability performance from a label than from standardized tourism product advertising (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). Today a growing number of tourism products are equipped with labels, but truly insightful information on their significance is rare (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). Tourism labels appear in highly diverse qualities, and it is not easy to differentiate between what is reliable and what is dubious (Plüss & Zotz, 2012). One of these certificates in the tourism industry is the TourCert Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) certificate, which tour operators get on their degree of sustainability and social responsibility achieved by their own business operations (TourCert, 2011).

TourCert is a non-profit organization for certification in tourism, which awards the CSR label and keeps register of CSR-certified companies, mainly tour operators (TourCert, 2012). TourCert brings experts from the tourism industry together with universities, environment and development organisations as well as politicians and because of many years of experience they stand for qualified training, consultancy and certification (TourCert, 2012). Their CSR certification guidelines define the standard of the CSR system in tourism and regulate the audit and certification system and an independent and honorary CSR certification council decides about the admission of auditors and about the label to be issued (TourCert, 2012).

Tourism companies using this CSR label have examined their business practices according to sustainability criteria and applied as well as evaluated quantitative and qualitative social criteria (TourCert, 2012). According to the TourCert standard, the companies which are certified have established CSR on a permanent basis and appointed a CSR manager, written a sustainability report and have developed a program for improvement (TourCert, 2012). Finally all companies awarded with this CSR label have committed to a continuously improvement of their sustainability performance. (TourCert, 2012)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not a new concept but it appears to become a subject of increasing interest amongst practitioners (Henderson, 2007). According to Henderson, 2007 it is preferred by many as a philosophy and policy which benefits the economy, society and environment based on the idea that companies have wider responsibilities beyond commerce (Henderson,

2007). But it is a challenging task for a company to recognize and perform in a way to meet these obligations, because of a high level of uncertainty about appropriate forms of commitment (Henderson, 2007). Nevertheless CSR has become an agenda for distinction and quality as well as a brand and image matter (Bode, 2010). CSR incorporates two major principles: the principle of voluntarism beyond legal compliance and the principle of equal consideration of environmental, social and economic aspects (Bode, 2010). CSR covers philanthropic and to a much bigger degree business-related activities, linked to all core processes and products of a company (Bode, 2010).

The tourism industry would seem to have particular and identifiable duties outside of the business arena due to its very close relationship with destination environments and societies which are components of its products (Henderson, 2007). In order to concentrate on CSR in the tourism industry it is important to look at various points along the value chain (Bode, 2010). From the planning process before the trip to the moment of travelling, the actual “holiday experience” as well as the after-sale care once a tourist has come back home: all these steps require specific attention to and the observance of environmental, social and economic factors (Bode, 2010). However the supply chain of a product is usually not controlled by solely one party or individual and different elements are often operated by multiple stakeholders (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). That leads to difficulties in controlling the single element of corporate social responsibility (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Nevertheless tourism companies have definite and serious obligations concerning various aspects of conditions at the places they are selling which are likely to influence them to the adoption of CSR (Henderson, 2007). This tendency has been encouraged by evolving consumer tastes, the environmental movement and official demands for better tourism planning and management (Henderson, 2007). Responses to these influences vary and companies understand CSR in different ways, but there seems to be a marked trend towards acknowledgement of responsibilities and efforts at their discharge (Henderson, 2007). There are also critics of CSR existing such as Henderson (2005), who state the goal of business is to make profit and should be based on the notion that competition and economic freedom are within a market driven economy (Henderson D. , 2005).

Until today there is no common agreement to what extent an engagement in CSR can influence the consumer behavior (Goodwin & Francis, 2003). Consumer behavior refers to the process of acquiring and organizing information in the direction of a purchase decision and of using and evaluating products and services (Moutinho, 2000). This process includes the stages of searching for, purchasing, using, evaluation and disposing of products and services (Moutinho, 2000). The tourism buying decision has some unique aspects: it is an investment with no tangible rate of return and the purchase is often prepared and planned through savings made over a considerable period of time (Moutinho, 2000). That means the vacation tourist will invest with no expectation of material and economic return on his purchase of an intangible satisfaction (Moutinho, 2000).

The present thesis is investigating how certification or labeling is used in tourism by focusing on tour operators. The introduction of the existent thesis will be followed by various methodological considerations regarding the research design, chosen methods like qualitative interviews and different tour operator cases as well as theoretical and analytical approaches. The theory part of the thesis will contain two major parts certification and CSR. In the certification part the author is discussing how certificates and labels can be used and what the implications of using a label are. This will be put forward in a tourism context by focusing on tour operators. Furthermore the author is trying to figure out if a tour operator can use a label or certificate in order to influence the decision making process of a potential customer. On the opposite also the perspective of consumers will be illustrated through interviews with customers about their consumer behavior regarding CSR and labeling in tourism. In the CSR part of the theoretical considerations the general concept of CSR will be discussed and the meaning of CSR for tourism and especially for tour operators will be emphasized. In the analysis-part the qualitative interviews with representatives of different CSR certified tour operators as well as consumers will be used in order to draw on practical experiences and compare them with the theoretical framework constructed before. The results will be summarized and pointed out in an overall conclusion of the thesis in order to get an answer for the research questions:

“Why do tour operators engage in CSR, getting certified by the TOURcert CSR certificate and what the implications for them and the consumers are“.

“What are the perceptions from consumers concerning CSR and certification in tourism and to what extent match their expectations on a CSR certified tour operator with the tour operators’ supposed implications”

2. Methodology

2.1 Theoretical basis

The present thesis makes use of theory as well as empirical data. At first a literature review was done by the author as a means of gaining an initial impression of the topic area. Furthermore the theory was needed to figure out what is already known in connection with research about CSR and certification as well as theoretical and methodological approaches in the research area in order to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'. Reviewing literature helped to set a framework for the topic and functioned as a basis for developing research questions. Of course, the literature review finally also assisted with the interpretation of the author's research findings. For the present paper lots of articles from different peer-reviewed journals as well as textbooks were used. The mixture between these two types of literature was used because articles are very specific (Bryman, 2008, p.93) about the development of CSR and certification in tourism and with the help of various textbooks the basics of the topic could be understood. This literature mixture formed the basis of the narrative literature review used in that paper.

The researcher decided to make a narrative review, because it was important to still have the opportunity to move the boundaries of the study during the process. Furthermore the researcher was aware of the fact that the view on the theory or literature can change as a result of the analysis of the collected data. By doing a literature review, on the one hand the challenge was to figure out relevant texts and articles and break them down for the current topic, because plenty of sources existed. For example there are several studies existing on tour operators and responsible tourism (Miller, 2001; Tapper, 2001; Curtin and Busby, 1999), however, they are mainly UK focused and examine the destinations in which the tours operate rather than the operators themselves and their participation in CSR practices. Furthermore in the author's point of view it was difficult to identify the important theoretical aspects of certification and consumer behavior, which could be connected to the topic.

In the present thesis hermeneutic principles are used firstly for interpreting the meaning of different texts during the literature review and secondly for the

analysis by interpreting the empirical data. The interpretation of meaning is characterized by the hermeneutic circle (Kvale, 1996). The understanding of a text takes place through a process in which the meaning of the separate parts is determined by the global meaning of the text, as it is anticipated. The closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may eventually change the originally probable meaning of the totality, which again influences the meaning of the separate parts, and so on (Kvale, 1996). In principle, such a hermeneutical explication of the text is a boundless process, while it ends in practice when one has reached a sensible meaning, a valid consistent meaning, free of inner contradictions (Kvale, 1996).

Furthermore the researcher needs to take into account the dialogical production of meaning within the research context. The effect of the *double hermeneutic* means that the research context is not “meaning neutral” (Brogden, 2009). Instead, the researcher and the research are both active participants in the production of knowledge and the interpretation of meaning. Because of the contingent production of meanings inherent in the multiple layers of the investigation, the double hermeneutic engages both the researched and the researcher in a continuous interpretation of meanings within and through the discourses within which the research is embedded (Brogden, 2009).

In this scenario the double hermeneutic that the researcher acknowledge requires not only the context being researched (CSR and certification in tourism) but also through the semi-structured interviews (the act of finding out why tour operators getting CSR certified and what the implications for the consumers are) (Brogden, 2009). The research participants (tour operator representatives and consumers) are not finite objects of study; instead, the interviewees are engaged in meaning-making, and this meaning-making produces data, which are subsequently used in meaning-making by the researcher (Brogden, 2009). Because of the effect of the double hermeneutic, the researcher is similarly included, because the act of researching also contributes to the production of knowledge within the research context (Brogden, 2009). Consequently, the presence of the researcher serves to alter the meaning-making of the researcher and the participants throughout the research process (Brogden, 2009).

2.2 Factors influencing social research

2.2.1 Induction/deduction

Several factors might influence a social research to a greater or lesser extent, which will be investigated in the following sections. The relationship between theory and research might mainly appear in two ways, either inductive or deductive, but it has to be said that these two are rather tendencies than hard-fact distinctions (Bryman, 2008, p.13). Deductive work is characterized by deducing theories and then testing them through observations whereas induction means that theory is formed on the basis of observations (Bryman, 2008, p.9f). In the present thesis the process of relating theory and research might be described as being iterative, to improve understanding in a step by step manner. Even though both strategies are used the present thesis is primarily seen as deductive because no new theory is generated. It might be said that some kind of inductive work was also used in this thesis because the theories are viewed with other background information and adapted to the specific case, which might be seen as generating new versions of the theories, but since no totally new theoretical considerations are formed the author decided to describe the process of relating theory and empirical data as being deductive. Not just the relationship between theory and findings can influence the social research but also epistemological and ontological reflections.

2.2.2 Epistemological considerations in constructivism

In terms of epistemological considerations in constructivism (What is regarded as knowledge?) the author is a subjectivist. The researcher and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the “findings” are literally created as the investigation proceeds (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The author sees knowledge as created in interaction among investigator and respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The aim of the investigation is the understanding and reconsideration of the constructions that people, including the researcher, initially hold, aiming towards consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The meanings of statements will be analyzed, which means for the

present paper that the given answers from semi-structured interviews will be interpreted by the researcher.

2.2.3 Ontological considerations in constructivism

In terms of ontological considerations the author is relativist. Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Constructions are not more or less “true”, in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Constructions are alterable as are their associated “realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism’s relativism, which assumes multiple, apprehendable and sometimes conflicting social realities that are the products of human intellects, may change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). For the present thesis this means that the author is not looking for an external reality, for an overall right answer of the research question, but for individual viewpoints which form a context bound reality which can change anytime and in any directions. Next to the already mentioned influencing factors on social research there are still some missing, as for example the choice of the research strategy.

2.2.4 Research strategy – qualitative research

For the present paper the research strategy should function as a general orientation to conduct social researches. The qualitative strategy was used because the author wanted to put emphasis on words and content rather than quantifications. The preference in this approach lies in the emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret the social world and in the assumption that social reality is a constantly shifting accomplishment of social actors (Bryman, 2008, p.22). In this thesis a qualitative study is used because the author wanted to have exploratory and individual, in-depth information about the current topic. The individual adaptation of CSR and the perception of certification in tourism

are issues which require deep and detailed research which was done with the help of semi-structured interviews with four operator representatives as well as consumers.

2.2.5 Values and practical considerations

The last two issues that might influence a social research are values and practical considerations. There is a growing recognition that it is nearly impossible to keep out values totally from a research process and that numerous biases might occur because of that (Bryman, 2008, p.24). In the current thesis double hermeneutics are used and according to Gadamer prejudices and pre-judgements are the inescapable basis for all interpretations (Richardson & Woolfolk, 1994) and because of the fact that hermeneutics are based on interpretation these prejudices can't be excluded from the research. For the reason that both the researcher and the interviewees are active participants in the production of knowledge and the interpretation of meaning values from both parts are included, the risk of misunderstandings or misinterpretations exist. But from the author's point of view possible misunderstandings did not have fundamental consequences on the research quality and results.

But from the author's point of view the results might also be influenced by certain practical considerations as for instance the problem formulation required specific research design and –strategy as in-depth information about CSR and certification was needed. Also the fact that such a research on CSR and certification does not exist in that way, leads to a decision on a qualitative approach since the first facts are mostly gained through exploratory studies. These last aspects were just a few, but definitely essential reasons for choosing certain approaches over others.

2.3 Evaluation criteria of social research – trustworthiness

One important part of the methodological section is the reflection about evaluation criteria (in theory mostly known as reliability, validity and replicability) which might be used in order to find out the quality of a social research. As these terms are mainly used in connection with quantitative research there are

some authors who used other terms for similar approaches in order to transfer these criteria to qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1994) used the approach of trustworthiness, which entails: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this paper the Lincoln and Guba (1994) approach will be used as it was developed for qualitative research, which is done in this thesis as well. Furthermore it suits well to the constructivist point of view, saying that there is more than one and possibly several accounts of reality rather than one absolute truth about the social world (Bryman, 2008, p.377).

Lincoln and Guba (1994) propose that it is necessary to specify terms and ways of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research that provide an alternative to reliability and validity. The criterion of credibility is linked to the belief that more than one social reality exist out there (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus it is the credibility of the conclusions that is going to determine the acceptability of the research to others (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the present thesis credibility is tried to be accomplished by interviewing CSR experts of different certified tour operators as well as interested consumers, supported by the assorting various theoretical considerations.

Qualitative research is characterized by rich detailed findings which provide others with a database for making judgments about the possible transferability of findings to other milieus (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the present thesis the results are not made in order to be generalized and may not implicitly be transferred on other studies about tour operator management and CSR. But it might be the case that the results may function as a thought-provoking impulse for similar studies that might for instance deal with certification or CSR in tourism.

The third criterion of trustworthiness, dependability, might be seen as a parallel to reliability for quantitative researches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1994) propose that researchers should adopt an 'auditing approach' in order to assure dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This approach entails ensuring that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the current thesis the author tried to keep all steps traceable as they are described in a detailed manner. Decisions such as the

selection of respondents, interviews and audio files as well as data analysis decisions were judged and written down in order to make the research more transparent to the reader.

Establishing confirmability, which is the fourth and the last criterion of the trustworthiness approach, means that it should be apparent that the researcher has not allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct of the research and findings deriving from it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The author of the present paper tried to be as objective as possible even though complete objectivism is impossible in social research. For example in the present thesis the author mostly tends to trust the theory as well as statements of the tour operator representatives and consumers since they inclined to have more in-depth knowledge about certain issues. For example in the present paper the author tried to evaluate theories in an objective manor, being critical about certain statements and not totally believe everything said by the experts. Also the answers of the respondents are researched as objective as possible without allowing personal opinions influencing the analyzing process (as far as this is possible).

2.4 Research design and research method

2.4.1 Comparable design with multiple case study elements

In the present thesis the comparable research design is used because the author assumes that development and changes can be better understood when more than one example are used and compared. With the help of similar and hence comparable tour operators (regarding their perception of CSR and not their products) and consumers (regarding their knowledge of CSR and their travel attitudes), similarities and differences can be recognized and may give occasions for questioning concepts of the theoretical chapter. Attention was paid to the institution's own perception of CSR and their reasons to become certified. Within the research design, also elements of multiple-case studies can be found as different cases will be looked at in-depth. But for it to be a true multiple-case study, the thesis would have to consider many or even all of the dimensions and factors that have an impact on the performance of tour operators (Bryman, 2008, p.60). In fact it is dealing specifically with their

perception of CSR and reasons why they decided to become certified and what the implications for them are. Also in the consumers point of view was looked at in order to recognize possible gaps between companies and consumers perception. So the research design of the present project may be described as a comparative design with multiple-case study elements.

2.4.2 Interviews

The chosen research method in the existing thesis is semi-structured telephone interviews. It was preferred over others because on the one hand it gives the interviewees the possibility to answer open questions broadly and to include some examples or specific stories about that issue. On the other hand the themes that should be investigated are written down in order to cover all aspects. Open questions in order to get detailed, rich answers as well as follow-up questions are used and going off the planned track is seen as a good possibility to gain even more knowledge about the interviewee's point of view (Bryman, 2008, p.438). An interview guide was used as a memory list of questions and topics that should be discussed in order to be able to deal with the problem formulation, but the sequence might alter from interview to interview according to the respondent's answers. During the interviewing process attention was paid to the fact that the language is comprehensible, so no technical language was used and that the questions did not lead the answers in any kind of direction. Nevertheless the language might also be seen as a disadvantage of the present thesis as the interviews were conducted in German, which means statements need to be translated, which can entail certain biases. But during the interviewing processes the author didn't notice any misunderstanding from the questions.

The interviews in this thesis started with general, introducing questions to the respondent in order to get into the conversation and the interviewer tried to act responsive to what was said. These interviews were done by telephone and there are several advantages of telephone interviews over personal interviews. For the author it had the advantage that the interviews were quicker to administer (Bryman, 2008, p. 198), because by doing personal interviews the researcher would have had to travel far distances and had to spend a great deal

of money and time due to the different location of the interviewed tour operators and consumers. Telephone interviews have a further advantage, because in personal interviews respondents' replies are sometimes affected by characteristics of the interviewer (for example, class, ethnicity) and indeed just by his or her presence (implying that the interviewees may reply in ways they feel will be deemed desirable by interviewers) (Bryman, 2008, p. 198). According to Bryman, 2008, the remoteness of the interviewer in telephone interviewing removes this potential source of bias to a significant extent (Bryman, 2008). But of course, there are also some limitations of telephone interviews existing in comparison to personal interviews.

The length of a telephone interview is unlikely to be sustainable beyond 20-25 minutes, whereas personal interviews can be much longer than this (Frey, 2004). However in the current thesis this limitation is not that problematic, because the interviewed tour operator representatives claimed that they have just a short period of time and most of the interviews can last at maximum 25 minutes. Another limitation is that the telephone interviewer can't engage in observation (Bryman, 2008). This means that they are unable to see the faces of the respondents when they were asked a specific question, for example if the question is unclear or critical (Bryman, 2008). Of course there are more limitations existing, but in the author's point of view they are less relevant for the actual thesis.

After all interviews were done and recorded, they have been listed into a meta-matrix because key themes could though be identified as well as similarities and differences. The meta-matrix was done, because the author's focus is on content and statements rather than pauses or linguistic patterns. Furthermore, because of the fact that the interviews were done in German the meta-matrix were chosen because it puts emphasize on a specific statement and not on whole answers. By translating the whole answer more biases could occur through translation errors. The recording in this thesis was done because it helps to correct limitations or memories, it permits repetitions and it allows the data to be reused (Bryman, 2008, p.452). A disadvantage of recording interviews might be the uncomfortable feeling for the respondent. This could for

example lead to biased answers because of the fear of the participant to give wrong statements.

2.4.3 Sampling

The author decided to base his study on qualitative interviews with representatives of different CSR certified tour operators as well as consumers. The decision to investigate the supply and the demand side was made, because the intention of the author was primary to find out why tour operators engage in CSR and what the implications for them are and secondary how their perception of CSR and certification matches to the perspective of the consumers. Focusing on CSR certified tour operators was done in order to achieve the certainty that the interviewed tour operators take the CSR issues seriously and the risk of choosing companies which do “greenwashing” could be reduced. Furthermore in the author’s perspective by interviewing certified companies the implications of a certificate can be better figured out, because they can explain differences before and after the certification process.

Therefore a purposive sampling was done in order to make sure that the tour operators, which were sampled, are relevant to the posed research questions. This relevance was seen by the author because of the fact that these tour operators got a CSR certificate and present themselves as a social responsible tour operator. Furthermore the author was depended on the willingness of the tour operators and consumers to cooperate with a student master thesis. Different tour operators were chosen to achieve a greater variety of the sample in order to ensure that sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics (travel products, visitor numbers, target-groups) (Bryman, 2008, p. 415). The interviewed people at the tour operator did not have the same positions in the different companies. In the point of view of the author it was more important to interview people who are willing to give a lot of required information than comparing personal attitudes of managing people.

The consumers were chosen in a convenient and snowball sampling way. With this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with one person or a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses theses to establish contacts with others (Bryman, 2008). The first interviewee

were known by the author and therefore it was assured that he was familiar with the term CSR, has a lot of travel experiences and might be part of a potential target group. This interviewee gave the author an advice, which people might have a similar intention to CSR and traveling. By doing such a sampling the author could be sure that he will choose consumers, who are really interested in CSR and traveling in order to receive useful data. A negative aspect of such a sampling approach is that it does not allow generalizing the result (Bryman, 2008, p. 182). The findings may sound quite interesting, but the problem with such a sampling strategy is that it is impossible to generalize the findings, because it is unknown of what population this sample is representative. The data will not allow definite findings to be generated, because of the problem of generalization, but it could provide a springboard for further research (Bryman, 2008). However it was never the goal of the current thesis to develop a result, which could be generalized.

2.5 Data Analysis

The goal of analyzing the gained data is to figure out and interpret the relevant statements of the interviewees (Bryman, 2008, p. 538) and that means the analysis in the current thesis is mainly based on the meta-matrix framework. By doing the interview analysis the author tried to extract facts and essential meanings from the statements of the interviewed people. The interviews will be analyzed by a qualitative thematic analysis. The meta-matrix framework can be described as a matrix based method for ordering and synthesizing data (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). The idea is to construct an index of central themes and subthemes, which are represented in the matrix. These themes and subthemes are the product of thorough analyzing the data and afterwards the meta-matrix framework is applied to the data, which are organized initially into core themes (Bryman, 2008). The data are then displayed in terms of subthemes within the matrix and for each case (Bryman, 2008). This approach is meant to provide a framework of the thematic analysis and one way of thinking how to manage themes and data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). According to Ryan & Bernard, 2003 doing a thematic analysis has, among others, several advantages: At first differences and similarities can be clearly recognized through the meta-matrix framework, because the framework illustrates how

interviewees discuss a topic in different ways and differ from others (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Secondly theory related material can be connected precisely to the themes and potential gaps can be recognized (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The thematic analysis with the meta-matrix framework also has some limitations. It does not produce as much and detailed data as transcriptions and it might happen that the researcher summarizes too much data which could lead to a lower quality of this data. Furthermore it could be the case that the analysis has a lack of theoretical connections, if the participants of the interview answered the questions in a different way than expected by the interviewers.

3. Theory

3.1 Tour operator market

Over the past decade, the tour operator market has experienced intense competition between the major tour operators (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 2008). Many operators have considered horizontal integration initiated by the larger tour operators in order to increase their market share and reduce competition, but this has mainly resulted in price wars which has lead and continues to lead to reduced profitability (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 2008). Tour operators provide an important link between tourism supply and demand, facilitating the circulation of products and information between the two and representing a critical pressure point in the mass tourism system (Curtin & Busby, 1999). They trigger the actions and responsibilities of other tourism stakeholders, in terms of supply chains, consumer behavior and destination response (Budeanu, 2005). Tour operators are highly dependent on the customer's needs, because the customers decide where to go (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 2008). The ever increasing choice of tourist destinations provides tour operators with more choice of products to sell and therefore being less dependent on any specific destination (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 2008). Furthermore like any other distributor, tour operators operate in a dynamic and price competitive market, selling a non essential product, and thus trying to cater to their potential clients' needs and not those of the destinations (Carey, Gountas, & Gilbert, 2008). In the author's point of view these statements might be too generalized, because in nowadays and especially in the context of CSR the needs of the destination are important for a tour operator as well. Maybe a larger tour operator could neglect the needs of the destination to some extent, but smaller and specialized tour operators, which only focus on a few or one specific destination, have to take the needs of the destination into consideration in their business.

Miller's (2001) examination of the role of CSR in the global tourism industry identified and evaluated a number of factors influencing the responsibility of tour operators' positions (Hall & Brown, 2008). According to Miller (2001) smaller incoming agencies and tour operators better understood the destinations to which they took their clients and so had a heightened awareness of destination

issues and problems, although combined with an inability to provide solutions for them (Miller, 2001). On the other hand larger tour operators were seen as being financially able to take remedial steps, but were so removed from the destinations that they often lacked awareness of the issues and problems found there (Miller, 2001). From the author's perspective Miller's statements are too simplistic and generalized, because even a small tour operator can reduce problems or provide solutions in the destination by engaging in sustainable tourism or CSR.

Within the tourism industry it is generally agreed that there are increasing overall societal and environmental concerns, and that this will increase the demand for more sustainable destinations and travel preferences (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). These, in turn, will increase the pressure for tour operator management policies and responsibility (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Although market surveys repeatedly indicate that consumers regard the environment as an important consideration, the gap between what respondents idealize and their actual behavior is often largely different (Hall & Brown, 2008). Thus views are held that marketing which promotes 'sustainable tourism' probably result in more business, while research suggests that market advantage forces companies to improve their ethical performance (Hall & Brown, 2008). Conversely, as more tour operators see the need to adopt the marketing concept of social responsibility, it loses its ability to provide market advantage, merely preventing companies from becoming uncompetitive and it may thus be seen as a necessary extra cost (Hall & Brown, 2008). From a tour operator's perspective this could lead to the situation that customers will lose their trust or beliefs and the concept is becoming relatively meaningless (Hall & Brown, 2008).

3.2 The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility

A recent business trend emphasizes that firms are expected to go beyond their profit-orientated activities and increase the wellbeing of the community, making the world a better place (Robins, 2005). This means that the business sector should develop a noticeable non economic function in society rather than only producing goods and making profits, by developing society driven actions

(Nicolau, 2008). According to Falck and Hebich (2007) it is suggested that if a company's aim is to survive and make money, the best way is to take a long term view and understand that if it treats society well, society will return the favour (Falck & Hebich, 2007). Preston and Sachs (2002) go even further when they stated that corporation cannot and should not survive if it does not take responsibility for the welfare of all its constituents and for the wellbeing of the larger society within which it operates (Post, Preston, & Sachs, 2002). Therefore firms have ethical responsibilities that include a range of societal norms or standards, and this seems particularly true for businesses in a consumer orientated industry such as tourism (Nicolau, 2008).

CSR refers to a company's voluntary activities *'that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law'* (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001, p. 117). Examples include the adoption of advanced human resource management programs, the reduction of environmentally dangerous substances, philanthropic activities, the production of products integrating social attributes, and support for local businesses (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001).

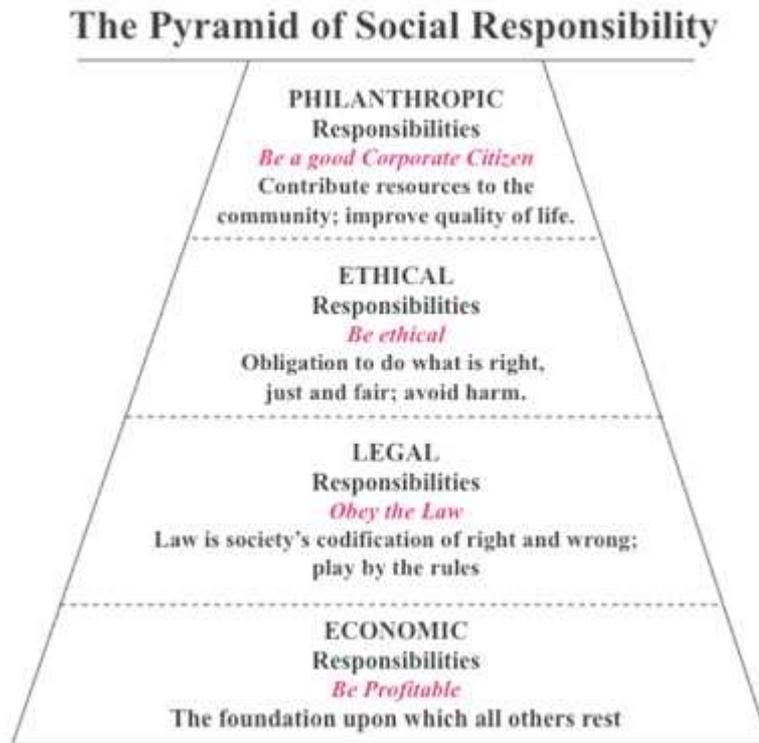
As mentioned above businesses have other responsibilities than those which are commercial. They are also in charge for the well being of society which extends to a healthy physical environment (Hopkins, 1999). Environmental conservation is a key aspect of sustainable development, alongside respect for the individual and society and reference is frequently made to a triple bottom line which covers environmental and social as well as economic returns (Zadek, 2002). Nevertheless, wealth creation and profitability remain ultimate objectives and CSR is believed to have useful commercial and cost saving functions in areas of staff recruitment and retention, image and brand building, advertising, differentiation and competition (Pearce & Doh, 2005). While there is an assumption that CSR will lead to economic and non-monetary rewards, its direct effect on financial and other results is disputed and there could be extra spending on items such as labor and materials (Knox & Maklan, 2004). There might be fundamental tensions between commercial priorities and a social and environmental orientation. Companies must strike an appropriate balance in

degree of commitment and avoid excessive involvement which detracts from the pursuit of vital corporate goals (Henderson J. C., 2007).

Because of the fact that the principles of sustainable development have much in common with those of CSR the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Henderson J. C., 2007). However, in the point of view of Henderson J.C. (2007) it is important to make a distinction between both terms, because in her perspective sustainable development seeks to embrace all the participants in the development process and give equal weight to their voices (Henderson J. C., 2007). On the opposite CSR maintains a company perspective and questions of the profitability remain at the forefront, not to be eclipsed by social and environmental agendas (Henderson J. C., 2007).

In the author's point of view the argumentation from Henderson J.C., 2007 could be supported by Carroll's framework of CSR. Carroll suggested that four kinds of social responsibilities constitute total CSR: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (Carroll, 2007). Furthermore, these four components of CSR might be illustrated as a pyramid in order to be sure that all of these kinds of responsibilities have always existed to some extent (Carroll, 2007). Ethical and philanthropic functions became much more significant in recent years (Carroll, 2007).

Figure 1 The pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility



Source: Carroll, A.B. in Crane, A. & Matten, D., 2007

At the bottom of the pyramid are the economic responsibilities of the company. All other business responsibilities are based upon the economic responsibility of the firm, because without it, the others become irrelevant considerations (Carroll, 2007). This matches to the statement of Henderson, J.C. (2007) who mentioned that the profitability is still at the forefront of business operations. This CSR pyramid portrays that different components taken together constitute the whole CSR of a business. In the author's point of view the model of Carroll is very static. The different concepts look exclusive and the model gives no advice what happens if one and another responsibility are in conflict. Because of the complexity of CSR the author thinks that there might be a situation in daily business where for example the economic and ethical responsibilities are in conflict. The author could also imagine that it is difficult to decide to what responsibility a certain issue belongs, for example if a tourism company is operating in Africa they could be confronted with the issue of HIV and should according to the CSR concept engage in reconciling treatment costs. But is that issue primarily an economic responsibility (given the medium to long term

effects on the workforce and economy) or is it ethical (because HIV sufferers have human rights and need help) or is it philanthropic (because HIV is not an occupational disease, so surely treatment amounts to charity) (Visser, 2005)? Furthermore the CSR responsibilities may vary from continent to continent, Visser (2005) mentioned that in Africa for example philanthropic responsibilities are more expected than ethical or legal (Visser, 2005). That is why it is difficult in the author's point of view to illustrate the dynamic process of CSR in one model, especially because of all the different definitions and perceptions of CSR in different cultures all over the world.

There is a common agreement that CSR relates to a company's obligation to be accountable to all of its stakeholders in all its operations and activities with the aim of achieving sustainable development not only in the economic dimension, but also in the social and environmental dimensions (Dodds & Kuehnel, 2010). A key point by doing research in the field of CSR is to note that CSR is a developing concept that currently does not have a universally accepted definition, however all refer to more or less the same concept although with different areas of emphasis (Valor, 2005). According to van Marrewijk (2003) there are three approaches of the concept of CSR, each including and transcending one other, showing past responses to the question to whom an organization has a responsibility (van Marrewijk, 2003):

- The shareholder approach that outlines the main responsibility of business is to maximize profits of shareholders.
- The stakeholder approach is that a business has responsibility to all stakeholders and not just the shareholders.
- The societal approach assumes that business is responsible to the society in which it operates.

The shareholder approach can also be interpreted as business enterprises being concerned with CSR only to the extent it contributes to the aim of business, which is the creation of long-term value for the owners of the business (van Marrewijk, 2003). According to the societal approach regard as the broader view on CSR (and not necessarily the contemporary view), companies are responsible to the society as a whole, of which they are an integral part (van Marrewijk, 2003). They operate by public consent (license to

operate) in order to serve constructively the needs of society – to the satisfaction of the society (van Marrewijk, 2003). The societal approach especially appears to be a strategic response to changing circumstances and new corporate challenges that had not previously occurred and it requires organizations to rethink their position and act in terms of the complex societal context of which they are a part (van Marrewijk, 2003).

Van der Woerd and van den Brink (2004) outline four slightly different interpretations for CSR:

- *Compliance-driven* (regulation and obligation)
- *Profit-driven* (social and ecological initiatives have to contribute to the financial bottom line)
- *Community-driven* (a process of stakeholder engagement in which social, environmental and economic are important in themselves)
- *Synergy-driven* (actions creating value in the social, economic and environmental in a win-together approach by stakeholders)

The above presented principles of self-determination allow each and everyone to respond to outside challenges in accordance to its own awareness and abilities (van Marrewijk, 2003). Any organization has the right to choose one of the principles however not all these positions are equally adequate responses to perceived challenges offered in the environment (van Marrewijk, 2003). In the authors' point of view companies have to define CSR specifically for themselves and elaborate what it exactly means for the whole company, if they want a successful implementation of CSR. The author prefers the CSR interpretations of Van der Woerd, because he differentiates the stakeholder approach in two ways community-driven and synergy-driven. The author could also imagine that different four operators make a similar separation.

There are numerous reasons underlying organizations' motivations for engaging in socially responsible actions (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). At first firms may have altruistic intentions: they simply believe their CSR efforts are part of being a good global citizen (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Second, companies may engage in CSR activities as "window dressing" to calm down various stakeholder groups such as NGO's. Viewed in this light, CSR may simply be another cost of doing

business, it is something firms feel they have to do in order to avoid negative publicity and other actions from NGOs (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Third, there are potential contracting benefits that means that companies believe that CSR helps recruit, motivate as well as retain employees and numerous sources list these reasons as one of the most significant benefits of an active CSR program (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Fourth, there are also customer related motivations where CSR may attract consumers to buy a company's products or services. As such firms may obtain price premiums or garner increases in market share (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). For example companies which are manufacturing and selling luxury goods introducing eco-friendly products and supporting environmental causes. Such efforts also may help luxury goods companies reinvent their images; perhaps away from pure consumerism, toward an understanding of how luxury products might even be better for the environment (e.g., they last longer) (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Fifth, companies' focus on environmental concerns can lead to reductions in production costs and finally CSR can be viewed as an integral part of a company's risk management efforts (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). For example companies may voluntarily reduce emissions in an effort to prevent legislation that could require even tighter standards. The author is aware of the fact that there likely are other reasons associated with an active CSR agenda, for example customers may be more likely to purchase goods and services from socially responsible firms, suppliers may be keen on working with such organizations; there may be positive spillover effects for the supplier (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Furthermore it is also possible that firms engaging in CSR, are more likely to attract capital from investments (e.g. start-ups) and many individuals are likely wishing to align their investment money with their moral aims (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010).

3.2.1 CSR and tourism

Within the tourism industry, CSR has only just started to take precedence (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Tourism operators and destinations are starting to realize the negative impacts that tourism can have on their product and are becoming aware that the very resources that attract tourists need to be protected for long term business sustainability (Dodds & Kuehnel, 2010).

Sustainable tourism requires a holistic, integrated perspective that takes into account all the industries and resources upon which tourism relies (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). The set of criteria or principles that define the conditions for its achievement involves among others (Dodds & Joppe, 2005, p. 9):

- Protect and conserve sustainable resources
- Be a multi-stakeholder approach
- Be environmentally responsible
- Maintain the well-being and involvement of the local population or host
- Provide meaningful and fairly remunerated employment for the host population
- Have economic benefit
- Have a long-term view
- Have a triple-bottom line approach (environmental, social and economic)
- Be equitable
- Government must play a leadership role (e.g., impose a 'greater good' approach)
- Obtain optimum guest satisfaction and educate tourists about environmental and social concerns

The definition of CSR has many similar elements to sustainable tourism, both focus on how stakeholders should be identified and engaged and that initiatives should be measured to determine their impact on others (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Whereas CSR relates to a company's obligation to be accountable to all its stakeholders in all its operations and activities with the aim of achieving sustainable development not only in the economical dimension but also in the social and environmental dimensions, sustainable tourism was first seen mainly from an environmental perspective and has only recently integrated social and community aspects (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Today, it is commonly recognized that sustainable tourism is more than just environmental conservation of natural area (Dodds & Joppe, 2005).

Within the tourism industry it is generally agreed that there are increasing overall societal and environmental concerns, and that this will increase the demand for more sustainable destinations and social responsible travel

preferences (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). These, in turn, will increase the pressure for destination management policies and tour operator responsibility (Dodds & Joppe, 2005)

The German tour operator association 'forum anders reisen' installed a CSR system which is compulsory for all tour operators within that association in order to make sure that the tour operators act more social responsible¹. The tour operators among other things have to give answers to problems like (TourCert, 2011, p. 1):

- What remains in the country when the tourist season is over?
- Do tourism enterprises pay their workers living wages?
- Do resorts minimize waste and do they dispose of it in an environmentally friendly manner?
- Does the itinerary take into account natural resources, e.g. regarding the provision of water and energy, and the protection of nature and endangered species?
- Has the food offered at a typical local restaurant really been produced locally?
- How much CO² is emitted per tourist in transport?

The answers to these and many other questions provide information on the degree of sustainability and social responsibility actually achieved by a tour operator in his business operations (TourCert, 2011). As mentioned in the introduction the public is more interested and more sensitive about environmental issues and a growing number of consumers is willing to choose greener products, also in tourism (Font, 2001). But how is their attitude to CSR in tourism?

3.2.2 Consumer behavior and CSR

Although consumers may indicate that they expect environmental and social issues to be taken into consideration on their holidays, they do not take it upon themselves to ensure these criteria are being met and in their point of view to be responsible for ensuring more sustainable tourism falls in the hands of the

¹ http://forumandersreisen.de/philosophie_csr.php#1, 01.05.2012

operator (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). In the eyes of the consumers the tour operator should take social responsibility, but social or environmental considerations, although they may be expected to be addressed in the brochure or on the website of an operator or travel provider, are not demanded when booking travel packages (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). The only customer issues or questions were regarding stray animals or if there was an animal protection group to look after stray dogs or donkeys clients had encountered (Dodds & Joppe, 2005).

In order to recognize the most beneficial CSR approach and activities for the company it is important to figure out what the consumers expect from the organization. Therefore it is important that the companies understand the consumer behavior regarding CSR. This thesis will only demonstrate consumer behavior in the context of CSR as well as certificates and not discuss different consumer behavior models, because the focus in the section of consumer behavior in the current paper lies on investigating possible contradictions or compliances of the implications for tour operators and consumers. That is the reason why in the author's point of view it is not necessary to start an in-depth discussion about consumer behavior from the bottom.

In order to take sufficient actions in the area of tourism marketing it is important to understand how people perceive such things, as destination areas, air travel and travel advertising; how they learn to consume and to travel, how they make their decision and how their personality affects those decisions (Moutinho, 2000). Economic and social changes increase certain types of leisure activities and decrease others like the rise of energy costs, ecological issues or the access of more people to higher education are just a few examples (Moutinho, 2000). Travel decisions therefore are very much affected by forces outside the individual, including the influences of other people (Moutinho, 2000).

An important part of the consumer behavior with the aim of making a decision is the search of information. There are existing individual differences in terms of the likelihood of a tourist to be involved in a search, but the level of active search is usually dependent on the degree of balance between expectation of predicted benefits and costs, or on the degree of (un)certainty about the advantages of alternative destinations, products or services (Moutinho, 2000). Sometimes this search for information can be limited due to the large amount of

information, which is accessible for potential tourists and this would lead more to confusion and therefore people are looking for indicators, which bundle information and are also easy to access – like a certificate (Moutinho, 2000). With regard to vacation decision making it is found that social information sources are the most important and members of the immediate family rank first, relatives second and friends third (Jenkins, 1978).

Depending on the source of information communication can be classified as primary experiences derived directly from the product, secondary from the mass media, tertiary from travel agencies or exhibitions and lastly personal (Moutinho, 2000). Tourists will actively process the information provided by the source but will not make judgments about the product only based on information, because they combine it with other experiences and previous knowledge to develop attitudes and intentions to reach a buying decision (Moutinho, 2000). Communication is the determinant of much of vacation behavior and an advertisement is intended to communicate, allowing the acquisition of knowledge, the formation or change of a product image, the awakening of needs and wants, the creation of interest in a product and the incentive of action (Moutinho, 2000). However the most important form of communication is word of mouth, because this conversation activity is a channel for both receiving and sharing information concerning tourism products and it is the most reliable form of information (Moutinho, 2000). Service consumers prefer mainly the opinions and experiences of other comparable individuals in making service purchase decisions (Murray, 1991).

Being faced with a purchasing situation a tourist has a certain degree of risk involved in the decision to be made (Mitchell & Vassos, 1998). Perceived risk is a function of uncertainty and consequences (Mitchell & Vassos, 1998). This may include: uncertainty inherent in the product, uncertainty in place and mode of purchase, degree of financial and psycho-social consequences and the subjective uncertainty experienced by the tourist (Moutinho, 2000). The degree of risk may vary with the costs involved in a decision and the degree of certainty that the decision will lead to satisfaction (Mitchell & Vassos, 1998).

In order to understand how vacation tourists reduce risks it is necessary to consider the major types of perceived risks (Moutinho, 2000, p. 52):

- Functional risk: the risk that the product will not perform as expected
- Physical risk: the risk that the tourist product will be harmful
- Financial risk: the risk that the product will not be worth its cost, either in time or money
- Social risk: the risk that a poor product choice may result in embarrassment before others
- Psychological risk: the risk that a poor product choice will harm the consumer's ego

In the author's point of view a purchase of a CSR certified tourism product could minimize the physical, social and psychological risk to a certain extent, because of the fact that these tours fulfill certain environmental standards. On the other hand CSR certified tourism products are quite new and maybe the customers haven't experienced something like that before and they will not be satisfied with the performance of the product, therefore the functional and financial risk could be problematic. Furthermore travel products or services which are based on CSR are more expensive, like it is mentioned earlier and it could be possible that customers are not willing to pay so much extra for that kind of travelling and become disappointed. According to Moutinho (2000) several risk reducing strategies can be used by tourists in order to provide disappointments (Moutinho, 2000, p. 54):

- Expecting less from the product or service
- Regularly purchasing the same product
- Acquiring tourist information
- Purchasing the most expensive product
- Relying on government or consumer travel reports
- Relying on tourist guarantees

From the author's perspective not all of these risk reducing strategies are suitable in the context of purchasing a CSR certified tourism product. Collecting information is always a useful tool either by word of mouth or through reliable media. Relying on government or consumer travel reports as well as tourist

guarantees can also act as risk reduction tool. The author could imagine that in the tour operator's view also a certificate should act as risk reduction tool because, it functions as a kind of quality indicator and guarantee a certain set of standards.

Many consumer behavior studies are grounded in the cognitive information-processing paradigm and assess the antecedents, correlates and consequences of various stages in the consumer decision-making process: need recognition – information search – evaluation of alternatives – purchase – post-purchase experiences – disposal (Beckmann, 2007, p. 29).

Need recognition is dealing with the awareness, knowledge and interest of potential customers. The majority of consumers admit to be interested in CSR issues, but there is considerable heterogeneity among consumers in terms of CSR activities (Beckmann, 2007). The majority of consumers do not seem to be aware that many companies engage at least in some kind of CSR activities and other consumers are skeptical about companies' CSR communication (Beckmann, 2007). According to Beckmann (2007) consumers have a favorable attitude towards companies that engage in CSR and this will influence the *information search and evaluation of alternatives / attitudes and beliefs* (Beckmann, 2007). Nevertheless several aspects complicate the overall picture of the company e.g. the general reputation, the personal connection to the specific CSR activity, distinction between proactive and reactive CSR initiatives as well as of course quality and price (Beckmann, 2007). The latter ones are the core product attributes where most customers are unwilling to compromise regarding their *purchase intentions* (Beckmann, 2007). However a pro-active approach towards CSR can cause that consumers appear to be more resilient to negative information about a CSR committed company and stay loyal when there is an occasional lapse on its part (Beckmann, 2007). Additionally, consumers are obviously more sensitive to unethical than to responsible behavior e.g., "doing bad" hurts more than "doing good" helps (Beckmann, 2007). Nevertheless negative *post purchase experiences* with the product or service quality will in most cases backfire and thus prevent repurchase despite CSR activities (Beckmann, 2007).

One goal of the interviews is to find out how tour operators use their CSR engagement and if it could influence the decision making process of potential customers. On the other hand the interviews with the consumers should illustrate to what extent CSR generally matters in consumer behavior. Very few studies of consumer CSR address this issue explicitly and in most cases just one or two stages or a selection of concepts are investigated (Beckmann, 2007).

Tour operators have to deal with the fact that tourism is a service and intangible and it creates more uncertain and risky purchase situations for potential customers (Murray, 1991). Therefore it seems to be logical to expect that consumers acquire information as a strategy of risk reduction (Murray, 1991). Services are more difficult to evaluate than goods, as consequence consumers may be forced to rely on other indicators and processes when evaluating alternatives (Murray, 1991). Tourism marketers may benefit from the improved knowledge of search behavior in vacation planning (Moutinho, 2000). In general, knowledge of information acquisition strategies is important to marketing managers because information search is an early influential stage in the purchase decision process (Moutinho, 2000). The consumer information sources can be classified into two broad types, internal and external and both types are used by consumers to gather information and cope with perceived risk (Moutinho, 2000). Sources of external information search can be classified in terms whether the source is marketing orientated or whether information comes from personal or impersonal communication (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). Non-marketer-dominated information sources such as personal media are expected to play particularly important role in consumer decision process for services (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). However personal information and mass media are related in several ways, for example tourism indicates that mass media (such as tourist advertising and brochures) are consulted most in the beginning and personal media (such as salespersons, friends, and personal advice) are mainly used at a later stage of the vacation planning process (van Raaij & Francken, 1984). In the author's point of view a certificate could be also characterized as a marketing orientated external source of information, which could be helpful in a later stage of the decision making process for a specific

product. The author tries to get more specific information about this issue through the interview with consumers.

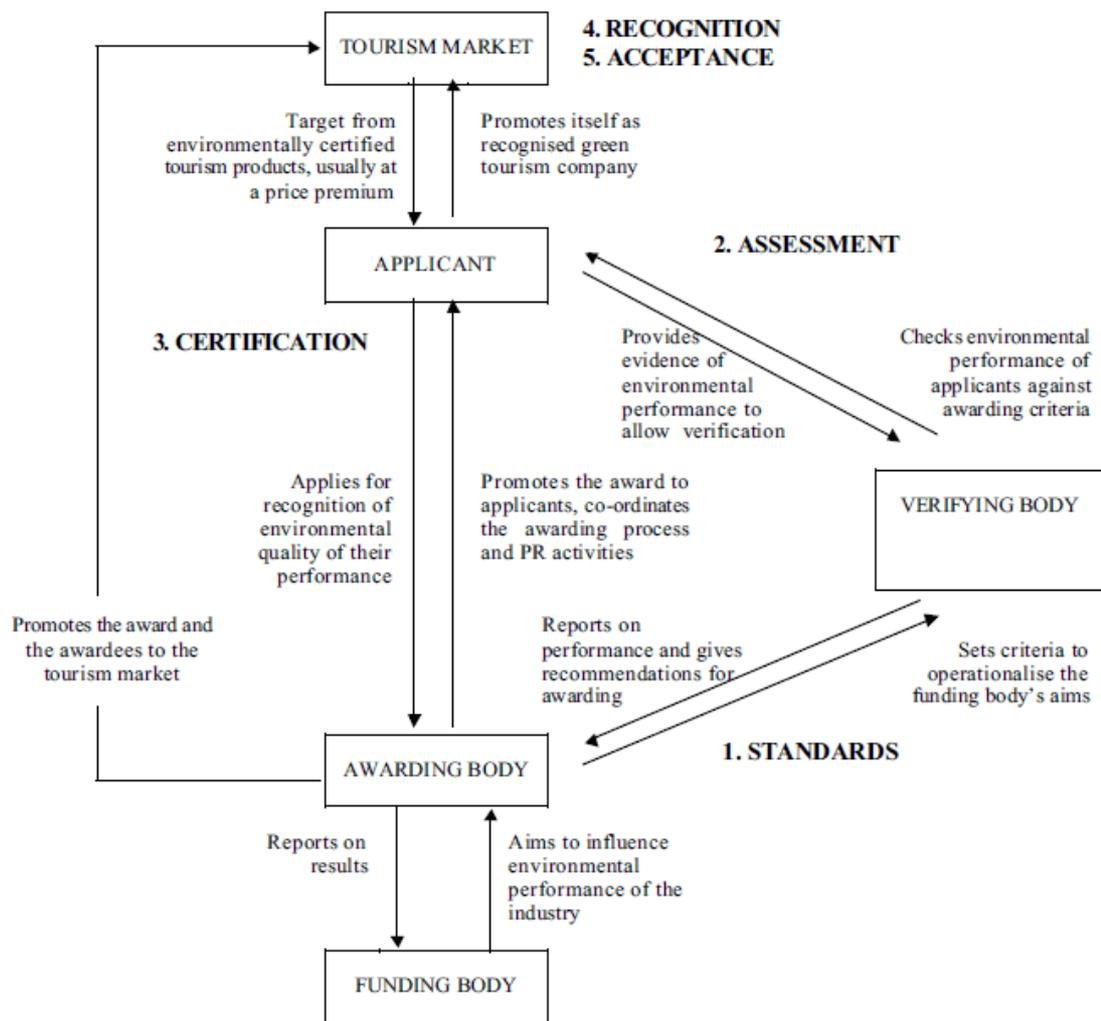
3.3 Certification in tourism

Certification can be described as the process of assuring consumers and industry that the company being assessed has met a set of standards and within the tourism industry, certification started in the early 1990's (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). The purpose of ecolabelling and/or certifications schemes in tourism is to highlight the best practices for products and services (Diamantis & Westlake, 2001). Such schemes aim to ensure that different components of the tourism industry from both the demand and supply elements are conducting their practices with fewer negative impacts on the environment, on society and on the economy (Diamantis & Westlake, 2001). Ecolabels or certificates do not only relate to ecotourism operators, but to any tourism company that uses the environment as part of its marketing strategy or that looks for external recognition for its environmental performance (Font, 2001). Domestically and internationally the main function of ecolabels in tourism is a market mechanism, a component in consumer choice (Buckley, 2002).

The majority of certification schemes accredit accommodations (approximately 63%), whereas only 7% address tour operators, mainly ground operators specifically dealing with ecotourism (Font, 2003). Approximately 40% of the criteria or indicators in standards relate to management issues and the remaining 60% relate to specific actions such as environmental benchmarking (34%), economic indicators (8%) or socio-cultural criteria (12%) (Font, 2003).

The progress made in the development and establishment of ecolabels in tourism needs to be understood in the context of how an ecolabel works, for this reason internationally agreed principles of compliance assessment, will be reviewed and these have been modeled as follows (Font, 2002). In this model tourism certificates will be used as examples of how this process works, and thus will be linked to the specific case in this thesis: the TOURcert certificate. Of course, not all certificates or labels follow always the whole process (Font, 2002).

Figure 2 The players in tourism ecolabels



Source: (Font, 2002, p. 201)

Funding bodies are the organizations that pay for a large part of the costs of development or management of an ecolabel or certificate (Font, 2001). They tend to be governmental or non-profit organizations and in a smaller number of cases, industry associations or tourism companies (Font, 2001). The current trend is to include both public bodies and NGO's to guarantee the credibility and transparency of the label, while also engaging industry associations and large tourism companies to ensure the industry commitment to apply for the label, and therefore the long term survival of the label (Font, 2001).

An awarding body may target many different sectors of the industry, basically differentiated between providers of tourism products (such as hotels, airlines, attractions and destinations) and distribution channels (travel agencies and tour operators) (Font, 2001). For tour operators is hard to ensure that their

packages, often run by local operators, meet all the claims, which are determined by the certificate and to be environmentally conscious means for them to find like-minded providers, limiting its choice and potentially making their product less competitive (Font, 2001).

The awarding body will have prepared a list of criteria to verify the tourism company's performance and management, and a briefing for a verifying agency to undertake this task (Font, 2001). The verifying body has the difficult task of operationalizing these criteria, which are too often the result of compromises, showing their weaknesses at this stage (Font, 2001). The applicant, for example a tour operator, has many reasons to appear environmentally friendly through a certificate and not only selling it to potential customers, but it is also beneficial for a company when dealing with the public sector, non-profit organizations, traders and company employees (Font, 2001).

In the case of The Tourcert CSR certificate the German Federal Environment Foundation (DBU) has financially supported the development and establishment of the process and is acting as the funding body (Reißland & Thomas, 2012). The awarding body is the Tourcert GBR they set the criteria which have to be fulfilled in order to receive the certificate from this non-profit organization (Reißland & Thomas, 2012). The verifying body is an independent certification council which sends auditors to the applicant in order to check their environmental performance against the awarding criteria and gives the recommendations to the awarding body regarding on their performance (TourCert, 2011).

The overall goal of certification is that the label will be recognized by consumer or distribution channels like tour operators and considered as added value leading to its acceptance in the market place in order to support the marketing of companies that make the grade (Toth, 2002). The response to any certificate by consumers, tour operators and other stakeholders depends on the social, political and economic context (Dudley, Elliott, & Stolton, 1997). Relevant factors include: the particular environmental issue or parameter to which the label refers; the level of knowledge and concern among potential clients and other users in relation to environmental issues in general and the ecolabel parameters in particular; the degree of consensus regarding the meaning and

significance of terms used in the ecolabel and the existence, number and level of acceptance for competing ecolabel schemes (Buckley, 2002). Nevertheless a general increase in public environmental awareness may not necessarily translate to a higher response to tourism ecolabels for various reasons (Buckley, 2002, p. 185):

- Specific environmental concerns and priorities may differ among countries and socio-economic groups
- Level of public concern over the environmental impacts of tourism is far lower than those over such activities as large scale logging
- Relevant environmental information on competing tourism products may be more difficult to obtain and less clear-cut than for retail manufactured products among others
- Consumers have often not sufficient time, resources or expertise to assess the relative environmental performance of competing products, then the label becomes simply one of many characteristics without understanding its message

One of the basic questions of certification in tourism is if particular individuals or identifiable market segments choose certified tour operators, tour companies, travel agents or destinations, because according to Buckley (2002) there is no empirical evidence existing (Buckley, 2002). Because of the fact that a tremendous amount of different labels in tourism exist it can be assumed that at least some tourists will choose their principal destination at least partially on environmental management grounds – rather than choosing a destination for its natural and cultural attractions, or personal reasons and then selecting an ecolabeled tour operator for or at that destination (Buckley, 2002). Another possibility is that some tourists may choose to travel with a certain tour operator with a good reputation for environmental management practices as well as customer satisfaction and then go for a tour or destination offered by that tour operator (Buckley, 2002). Through the interviews the author wants to find out how the tour operators see this situation, and if the certificate in their point of view is a reason why they are chosen before customers choose a specific destination.

It is argued that a complicated system as well as multiple, different ecolabel schemes will generate such confusion that they will be ignored by the customers (Diamantis & Westlake, 2001). Furthermore there will always be a number of tourists who will pay little attention to a certificate unless the details of criteria, evaluation and audit procedures are made explicit (Buckley, 2002). Once the certificate is transparent regarding its criteria and has been in operation long enough for potential clients or the general public to recognize the name, there is commonly a demand that the label should mean something so that the customers who pay extra for such products know what they are getting for their money (Buckley, 2002).

For an ecolabel scheme to provide something which can continue to satisfy consumers so that they receive value for money, must generally contain two critical components which according to Buckley (2002) might be described as guts and teeth (Buckley, 2002). The guts are the substantive criteria that distinguish between products, services or corporations which have earned the label and which have not (Buckley, 2002). The teeth of scheme are the procedures adopted to ensure that the label is only used where it has been earned and that it is withdrawn if no longer applicable (Buckley, 2002). These include application, assessment and audit procedures and effective and enforced penalties for unauthorized use of the ecolabel (Buckley, 1999). However, in practice consumers may primarily judge products, services or companies based on personal experiences or friends' word of mouth instead of a label (Buckley, 2002).

The benefits of certification are seen to be wide-spread although the majority of programs uphold marketing and training as their primary benefits (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). With the designation of a logo, certification is thought to give companies a competitive advantage and increased linkages into the distribution chain and to consumers through marketing (inclusions on web sites, travel fairs, brochure recognition), all of which would be assumed to give businesses competitiveness (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Additional benefits perceived from certification include (Dodds & Joppe, 2005):

- The ability to distinguish sustainable tourism from 'greenwashing'
- The encouragement of voluntary improvements

- Showcasing best practices
- The use of the standard as a blueprint for future development
- Training of management procedures
- Cost savings
- Peer recognition
- Achievement beyond legislation compliance

Determinants of success of schemes have been linked to marketing which to date has been largely unsatisfactory due to the small number of certified products and therefore reduced appeal to large operators to use them in their product choice (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). Also, the number of schemes and labels makes it difficult for tour operators to incorporate them as they would have to educate the consumer about the standards behind each one and differences among them (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). This is beyond what tour operators deem practical for hard copy brochures.

Certified operators have seen cost savings and overall improved management structures through certification and some benefits to the community are improved environmental conditions of facilities or infrastructure improvements such as new access roads (although often larger hotel chains build water or sewage plants only for the hotel complex rather than the community or village at large) (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). As most certification schemes do not include labor or social/community issues, the local community has not greatly benefited and in addition, companies have not generally seen marketing benefits, and therefore have participated in schemes largely for cost savings or reporting purposes (Dodds & Joppe, 2005).

However, the TOURcert CSR certificate include all these things which are normally not part of the certificate, but that does not mean that it will be used differently from tour operators than the others. The author wants to get an idea though the interviews with tour operators and consumers, if the Tourcert CSR certificate is an appropriate tool to increase CSR related travel. Furthermore the author wants to find out how certification is seen by the tour operator as well as the consumers.

4. Analysis

The following analysis is based on the empirical data, which were collected by doing ten qualitative interviews, five with certified tour operators and five with potential consumers. These data will be analyzed and connected to the theory in order to get a clear idea why tour operators engage in CSR, getting certified by the TOURcert CSR certificate and what the implications for them and the consumers are. Furthermore the author wants to figure out, what the perceptions from consumers towards a tour operator are regarding CSR and certification in tourism are and to what extent they match with the tour operators' supposed implications. The next table present some key information about the tour operators, which have participated in the investigation.

Figure 3 The five interviewed tour operators

	Neue Wege	Oceano	Reise mit Sinnen	Travel to Nature	Re Natour
Type of tour operator	Healthy Tourism in Asia, Europe	Whale Watching specialist	Adventurous, luxury travel, worldwide	Specialist for Central America	Active - Nature Tourism, world-wide
Travelers per year	Ca. 3200	Ca. 1600	Ca. 3000	unknown	Ca. 4000
Shortcut in the analysis	TO1	TO2	TO3	TO4	TO5

The next table should illustrate shortcuts about the interviewed consumers in order to make it more comfortable for the reader to follow the analysis chapter. The abbreviation "Q" stands for the question, e.g. Q1 means Question 1.

Figure 4 The five interviewed consumer's shortcuts

	Consumer 1	Consumer 2	Consumer 3	Consumer 4	Consumer 5
Shortcut in the analysis	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5

In the introduction of the thesis it was mentioned that the public is more interested and more sensitive about environmental issues and that is why a growing number of consumers are willing to choose greener products (Font,

2001). The interviewed consumers agreed to the statement that they are more sensitive to greener products, but that do not necessarily lead to a change in their general consumer behaviour, beside the food sector (C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,Q23). This indicates that the findings of Hall & Brown, 2008 that consumers regard the environment as an important consideration might be true, but the gap between what respondents idealize and their actual behavior is still exists. Nevertheless in the author's point of view the fact that consumers are more sensitive for greener products lays the foundation that social and ecological responsible tourism products will be more demanded in near future.

4.1 Why tour operators engage in CSR?

The interviewed tour operators decided to utilize CSR as the main concept of the company for various reasons. The first one is the fact that since they were founded they were focusing on social and ecological aspects and they provided sustainable products (TO1,TO3,TO4,Q4). Hence it was obvious for the company to imply the whole concept to the own business (TO1,Q4). The other reason is that all the stakeholders and consumers should recognize that they are a company which is handling things differently than other tour operators and that the destination can also benefit from the tourism industry and not just the other way around like usual (TO2,TO3,Q4). Furthermore all tour operators mentioned that the destination is the capital of their business (TO5,Q3) and tourism in general is not sustainable (TO2,TO4,Q3) and therefore they need to act sustainable in order to protect the destination otherwise there could be no tourism in future (TO2,TO5,Q3).

“The people in the destination and the destination itself are the capital of our business and therefore it is important to deal with them responsible. So we have just two possibilities: To leave the destination after a few years or to act sustainable and dealing with CSR.” (TO5,Q3)

In addition, through CSR the tour operators can also improve their quality of their products or staff as well as the recruitment procedure (TO1,TO5,Q3). According to theory, CSR is believed to have useful commercial and cost saving functions in areas like brand building, advertising, competition (Pearce & Doh, 2005) but these are not mentioned by the interviewed tour operator representatives. In the author's perspective this could indicate that the

ecological and social aspects for CSR seem to be more important than the economic ones because of the fact that tourism is an industry which is highly dependent on an intact nature and local people.

Although all the tour operators have slightly different reasons why they finally engage in CSR, their understanding about the term CSR is quite similar. Four out of the five interviewed tour operators recognize a responsibility to all stakeholders, they are the people who need to be satisfied (TO1,TO3,TO4,TO5,Q2). One tour operator mentioned that their focus is a bit more on the environment because their core business is whale watching and therefore highly nature-based (TO2,Q2). However there are distinctions in how the companies exactly define CSR for their business and their activities (TO3,Q2). This is similar to the statement in the theory chapter that it seems to be more sensible to interpret CSR as an approach and afterwards develop your strategy and specific activities. According to van Marrewijk's approaches the interviewed tour operators follow the stakeholder approach of the CSR concept, because the answers from these answers above from the tour operators underline that the companies recognize that they have a responsibility to all stakeholders and not just the shareholders.

“All stakeholders should be satisfied in a sustainable and responsible manner”
(TO1,Q2)

Furthermore this indicates that in practice companies need to understand CSR for them rather than follow a hard definition of CSR and that is close to the statements of the theory.

Van der Woerd and Van den Brink have outlined four different principles of CSR which were presented in theory. These principles divide a stakeholder approach in two different ways – community driven or synergy driven. However the tour operators engage in a CSR project in order to deal with perceived challenges offered in the environment and thereby they did not make a strict distinction what principles they are following. If they are convinced from a specific CSR project they support it, this could be projects like building schools, developments of cooperation between blind and healthy children as well as environmental focused project like replanting (TO1,TO4,Q5). On the other hand

in the author's point of view that does not automatically mean that the interviewed tour operators do not think about how they can also benefit from their CSR engagement.

According to Spinkle and Maines, 2010 there were five main reasons among others why tour operators engage in CSR:

- altruistic intentions: they simply believe their CSR efforts are part of being a good global citizen
- "window dressing" to calm down various stakeholder groups such as NGO's
- potential contracting benefits that means that companies believe that CSR helps recruit, motivate as well as retain employees
- customer related motivations where CSR may attract consumers to buy a company's products or services.
- focus on environmental concerns can lead to reductions in production costs and finally CSR can be viewed as an integral part of a company's risk management efforts

All the interviewed tour operations mentioned that they need to take care about the environment and local people (TO2,TO3,TO5,Q3) because they are the core of their businesses, but in the author's perspective it is hard to judge if this is altruistic or more calming down various stakeholder groups. However, one statement of a tour operator is seen absolutely critical concerning their CSR activities:

*"[...] we do for example replanting if consumers answer a survey of us."
(TO1,Q5)*

In this scenario the tour operator pushes the responsibility back to client and it indicates that this tour operator hasn't completely understand the concept of CSR. In the author's perspective it is more the consumer than the company who is doing something good. This is an example how a tour operator could use his CSR engagement primary in order to benefit from it and salve their one's conscience.

Definitely one reason of engaging in CSR which was stated by the tour operators was the reduction of production costs (disposing catalogues, reducing paper usage) and that CSR can be viewed as an integral part of a company (TO1,Q3),(TO2,Q18),(TO5,Q1). The interviewed tour operators argued that customer related motivations where CSR may attract consumers are unfortunately not reality and furthermore there is no common agreement if CSR related holidays are a trend or not.

“CSR is the trend. It is probably not one of the first booking criteria that we are engaged in CSR, but it is a nice extra for the customer” (TO5, Q6)

“I think it is not a trend it is more a nice side effect of the products. We had no customers until today which have booked because of our certificate or CSR engagement”. (TO4,Q6)

4.2 Consumers' perception of CSR

In order to figure out if CSR is kind of a trend, the consumers were asked if they are familiar with the term CSR and what they think about social responsible traveling. Similar to the tour operators every consumer knows at least something about CSR but everybody understands and interprets it in another way. Some consumers focus on the local community in which the company operates and that the companies need to make sure that local people and local goods are included in the production process and they expect that they are working sustainable and not just focusing on profit maximization (C2,C4,Q32). Another one just answered that it is about companies doing something good which is not part of their core business (C5,Q32). One consumer makes a differentiation between positive and negative aspects of CSR.

“In a positive way that companies recognized that they have the responsibility to give something back to the community. Negative way: Some companies use it as a marketing instrument and it is part of a campaign among lots of other things just to increase the profit”. (C3,Q32)

This illustrates that there is still confusion existing about the term CSR and what it exactly is and that makes it difficult for tour operators to convince people and sell CSR based products. However all interviewed consumers had an opinion about social responsible travel. All of the consumers agreed that it is a positive

thing and that it is very important in tourism that companies take care of local people and especially the environment (C1,C2,Q33). Furthermore tourists should more align themselves to the destination and then the whole experience becomes more authentic (C4,Q33). In summary the intention to CSR based travel products is very positive which is underlined by the following statement:

“I always recognize the differences while I am traveling. Seeing poor people there and just a few meters away you see rich people in a city, because of the money from tourists. Then you have a bad conscience on your return flight. I think it is time for it [social responsible travel] and desirable” (C5, Q33).

There is obviously a common agreement or interest among consumers that social responsible travel is an appealing form of traveling in future. One challenge for tour operators is to inform and educate potential consumers about social responsible traveling and convince them that their products are really sustainable, because some consumers feel not well briefed about the companies' products and what they are exactly doing differently. Three out of five interviewed consumers explained that they have never seen or recognized advertisements from social responsible tour operators and they were not able to mention at least one tour operator, which is operating social responsible (C1,C3,C5,Q34). In contrast one consumer stated that would be easier to name several tour operators, which are definitely not social responsible (C4,Q34). In the author's point of view here is one of the major challenges for the social responsible tour operators, because of the fact that these tour operators are usually smaller ones they have a lack of popularity in contrast to the bigger ones. That means that the smaller social responsible tour operators need to do more marketing to increase awareness of their philosophy and products, but this requires a lot of money, which might be not available.

Other consumers are generally not convinced about social responsible travel or sustainability reports of companies (C2,Q34) and that makes it even harder for a tour operator to reach these people. Furthermore one consumer realized that it is difficult nowadays to separate what is sustainable and what is green washing (C4,Q34).

“I think it is hard to convince myself that the tour is really sustainable. The distinction for me is hard what is sustainable and what not” (C4, Q34)

There is also confusion between consumers, who is in charge for taking responsibility in tourism. Dodds and Joppe, 2005 mentioned that consumers mainly think that the tour operator should take responsibility and that social and environmental considerations should be addressed in their brochures. However in this investigation just one consumer responded that the tour operator is mainly in charge for social responsibility and that he as a consumer is not able to do something (C5, Q35). Other consumers stated that it has to be a mixture between all players in tourism and of course the consumers (C1, C2, C3, Q35). One consumer said we as consumer are in charge.

“I think mainly the consumer, because in our economy everything is offered so the consumer can buy whatever he likes and he has the power to buy sustainable products”. (C4, Q35)

Here again you could recognize that there is no homogeneity between consumers which are open-minded to social responsible travel. All have another level of knowledge about social responsible travel and they are all quite unsure about the information they receive, if they even recognize information about social responsible travel. Furthermore different views exist, about who should take responsibility in tourism. For that reason it is important for the tour operators that they try to educate the consumers in some way, but therefore they need to know, which information consumers really trust.

4.3 Consumer behavior and CSR

This information is an important part of the consumer behavior with the aim of making a final decision (Moutinho, 2000). For the tour operators it is essential to understand, how potential consumers look for information and that they will receive the right, trustful information about CSR. All consumers stated that they are primary searching for information on the internet, however in different ways. Consumers 1, 4 and 5 mentioned that they are using Google in order to compare different suppliers and see what kind of products exist (C1, C4, C5, Q26). Another way is to search for information in social networks and different bulletin boards about traveling and join online discussions about a

specific destination (C2,C3,Q26). Tour operators or travel agencies are seen as a secondary source of information in the eyes of the consumers, they are used if they are stuck or if the brand is unknown and they cannot evaluate it (C1,C5,Q36). But all consumers added that they would always trust more a recommendation or statement of friends or relatives as anything else, because there they can be sure that it is an honest opinion and they might have similar interests (C1,C3,Q27), (C2,C4,Q26). The meaning of friends and relatives is also important because of the fact, that too much information on the internet exists. The consumers responded that they look for tools which help them to bundle information, this could be a filter strategy as well as asking experts or friends (C2,C5,Q28). These statements are quite similar to what is written in the theory chapter and this indicates that it might be an appropriate way for tour operators to focus on these channels by doing marketing activities or using reviews from former guests, which share their experiences online.

Nevertheless consumers always have a form of risk involved in the decision that has to be made. According to Moutinho's, 2000 five different forms of perceived risks exist. The functional and financial risks are the two most important forms for the consumers in the current investigation. Concerning functionality the interviewed consumers wonder if it is the right product for their actual purpose and that they need to have a good feeling as well as the willingness for purchasing (C2,C4,Q29).

"There is always a kind of a barrier which needs to be crossed, if you do a new kind of holiday for a certain amount of money, because you don't know what you will get you can't check it before" (C3,Q36)

The financial risk is always present in two ways, because a products can be too expensive, but also too cheap and then the consumer takes into consideration that the quality he gets will be low (C3,Q29). This type of risk will be higher if the product in general is more expensive.

"If it is an more expensive tour I hesitate to confirm the booking, because I need to be sure that I get quality for my money" (C1,Q29)

These types of perceived risk which are mentioned by the interviewees are in the author's point of view the most relevant in the CSR context. On one hand it

is stated above that CSR based travel products are a bit more expensive and on the other hand for the potential consumers it might be something unknown, because it is still a new form of traveling and they have not that many experiences with such kind of holidays. In comparison the interviewed tour operators do not see the financial risk in the same way like the consumer, because they argue:

“In general products from niche operators are more expensive. The problem is more that we are not buying the same amount like larger operators, but therefore our quality is higher” (TO3,Q8).

This indicates that from tour operators' perspective the main task for them is to try to minimize the functional risk of the consumers. A common agreement exists in the way how consumers attempt to reduce the perceived risk: they are searching for more specific information, but again in different ways. For some consumers the following step is to ask friends again if they know something about it as well as contacting local people or experts like travel agents (C1,C2,C3,C5,Q30). However this could not be enough to reduce all the doubts of the consumers and that means that the perceived risk could also lead to the purchase of an alternative product.

“I am looking for more in-depth and detailed information as well as for other alternatives or even other products in another destination in order to make sure that I will be satisfied with the experience.” (C4,Q30)

In the author's point of view this situation, which is mentioned by consumer 4, that consumers think about doing a social responsible holiday, but because of a lack of information or an uncertainty about the quality of information they choose a more familiar form of holiday, due to the fact that they know what they will get, needs to be avoided by the CSR based tour operators. On the other hand the author could imagine that it might be desirable for other consumers that they do not know exactly what they will get and that they will feel a bit more independent or adventurous. These strategies of the consumers which are mentioned above are not new and they are part of the risk reducing strategies of Moutinho, 2000 which are stated in the theory chapter. This investigation indicates that (based on the consumer interviews) for potential consumers of a

social responsible holiday the following are the most appropriate tools to reduce the risk to get disappointed by buying such type of holiday:

- **Acquiring more in-depth (tourist) information** from friends and relatives
- **Relying on government or consumer travel reports**, preferably online
- **Regularly purchasing the same product**, however this assumes that the consumer have done at least one form of social responsible travel before.

Most of the interviewed consumers responded that they are willing to do such a social responsible holiday and that the positive aspects predominate the negative ones. The only negative one, which was stated, was the fact that the price might be too high (C3,C4,C5,Q36) and the uncertainty about the perceived quality (C4,Q35). However one consumer is not convinced that such a type of holiday would be really social responsible or sustainable.

“In the moment I would not do it, because it is too paradox for me. I can't identify with that kind of products, if I want to do a sustainable holiday” (C2, Q36).

The other consumers answered that a social responsible travel would lead to a good conscience while you are traveling, because you support the local community and it is more authentic (C3,C4,Q36).

[...] a pro is traveling with a good conscience, and maybe a kind of prestige I can tell somebody I did a responsible holiday (C1, Q36).

In order to summarize the paragraph about consumer behavior and decision making the statements of the consumers and what is analyzed above will be compared to Beckmann's, 2007 CSR consumer decision making process which is discussed in the theory. Beckmann's discussion about the need recognition, which is dealing with the awareness, knowledge and interest of potential consumers, can be observed in the same manner in the current investigation. On the basis of the answers of the interviewed consumers a considerable heterogeneity among them in terms of CSR activities can be recognized. The interviewees do not seem to be aware that many tour operators engage at least

in some kind of CSR activities and another consumer was skeptical in general about companies' CSR communication.

Furthermore Beckmann pointed out that consumers have a favorable attitude towards companies that engage in CSR and this will influence the information search and evaluation of alternatives. According to the answers of the interviewed consumers they might have favorable attitudes towards companies that engage in CSR and they appreciate their way in doing business but nevertheless this does not mean that it influences the information search in the current investigation. In the author's point of view it is because of the fact that it is mostly unknown that tour operators engage in CSR therefore it is not a benefit in the evaluation process of alternatives of the consumers. However this could change soon, if the tour operators could increase more awareness.

The author agrees with Beckmann's statement that most customers are unwilling to compromise by the core product attributes regarding their purchase intentions. This study indicates as well that the quality and price is still the overall criteria of the consumers when they make a purchase decision and if this is not matched the other attributes of the product like sustainability play a minor role.

Finally Beckmann claimed that negative post purchase experiences with the product or service quality will in most cases backfire and thus prevent repurchase despite CSR activities. If the expectations of the consumers are not matched and they are disappointed from the quality of the product, there is a high probability that these consumers won't choose such a product again, because on the one hand some consumers are generally skeptical about this type of traveling and on the other hand one consumer mentioned if he is not convinced before making a decision, he probably choose a product where he knows what he gets. Such a situation would make it more difficult for the tour operators to establish CSR based products, because of negative word of mouth and additional doubts to the existing ones about social responsible or sustainable travel. Therefore in the author's point of view in the context of social responsible travel it is even more important to understand what the consumers expect and fulfill these expectations, but that is not an easy task, because of the

heterogeneity of consumers and the different understanding of the term CSR and sustainability in tourism.

By having a short look about the expectations of consumers regarding social responsible travel it can be noticed that all of the interviewed consumers have different expectations. Some consumers must recognize a clear distinction from an ordinary holiday and identify the social and ecological responsible elements of the tour (C1,Q37). For another consumer social and ecological responsible elements are not enough for him the tour must be logical sustainable from A to Z, otherwise he would be disappointed (C2,Q37). Other consumers are interested in social responsible traveling in order to experience something new, it has to be:

“Something unknown, if I do an alternative form of traveling everything must not be same or on the same level like a package tour. I would expect a closer connection to locals and more smaller accommodations than usual” (C4,Q37).

Another participant answering in a quite different way in his point of view, it must be not something unusual:

“Probably the same [expectations] like on any other tour. I want to be satisfied and get something for my money. Generally it is good not having too many expectations than you cannot become so quick disappointed”

In the author’s perspective the last statement might be a bit crucial for the CSR tour operators, because such a consumer who has not too many expectations could purchase a greenwashing product, due to no specific expectations or imaginations about a social responsible travel product. In order to make it easier for consumers to get an imagination what stands behind social responsible travel, the TOURcert CSR certificate was created, which however is completely unknown by all interviewed consumers (C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,Q39).

4.4 Implications of the TOURcert certificate

In the theory chapter it was stated that one of the basic questions of certification in tourism is, if particular individuals or identifiable market segments choose certified tour operators, tour companies, travel agents or destinations, because according to Buckley (2002) there is no empirical evidence existing (Buckley,

2002). Hence, it is interesting why in this specific case tour operators decided to get certified, although an increase in bookings or brand awareness is not guaranteed. One of the main reasons which is mentioned by the participating tour operators was that they were looking for some kind of documentation that they handle things differently and offer alternative products as well as doing something good (TO1,TO2,Q11). Furthermore it was important for the tour operators to separate from the ones who are seeing CSR just as marketing tool or fashion.

“[...] especially in tourism we have many tour operators which do greenwashing so we were looking for a trustful certificate which was solely for tour operators” (TO4,Q11).

The benefits of certification are seen to be wide-spread although the majority of programs uphold marketing and training as their primary benefits (Dodds & Joppe, 2005). The interviewed companies mentioned that they are more welcome for the press, because of their CSR engagement and that they know their own company structures much better in order to evaluate the tour operator and they could improve several things (TO1,TO3,Q13). They are missing a competitive advantage after the TOURcert certification process or a marketing boost (TO3,Q12).

“We expected a boost for our marketing, but this was definitely not happen. [...] The organization TOURcert should also do more because they are more objective in marketing terms than us as tour operators” (TO3,Q14).

Most of the interviewed tour operators agreed to the quote above and they expect more effort of the TOURcert organization and that they do more public relations and trying to increase the awareness of the certificate (TO1,TO4,Q21).

“I expect that TOURcert also doing PR in order to increase awareness of the certificate” (TO2,Q14).

These tour operators agreed that here their expectations are not matched and they see a need for improvement. Specific marketing activities for and with the certificate in combination with the certified tour operators should be the next step (TO1,Q14). The marketing effect through certification which is mentioned

in theory has not happened, that means the applicant of a certificate cannot be sure in advance that the certificate can be used beneficially in marketing terms. However, according to model of Font, 2002 (The players in Tourism ecolabels, Fig. 2) this belongs to the main tasks of the certification body and therefore the criticism of the certified tour operators are in the author's point of view comprehensible. Nevertheless the certificate is used as a marketing tool by the participating companies on the website, newsletters or publications (TO1,TO2,Q16). Indeed, Dodds and Joppe, 2005 declared additional benefits perceived from certification. Most of the interviewed tour operators mentioned that after the certification process they recognized several internal procedures, which could be improved in order to work more efficient, sustainable and saving costs (TO1,TO5,Q14).

"Internal processes could be optimized. Before the certification process we have not recognized that there is some space for improvements" (TO4,Q18).

"We know our partners better and our own company we had to investigate everything in the company, because of the certification process and the staff is better included in the companies' philosophy" (TO2,Q18).

In summary all companies stated that they benefit from the certification process at least for one way. The certificate gave the company the ability that potential consumers are able to distinguish social responsible tourism products from green-washing, optimizing management procedures, cost saving due to a more efficient way of work as well as an improved knowledge of the partners from the company. In the author's point of view the fact that a marketing boost was missing was not that surprising, because on the one hand due to the small number of certified tour operators it is still unknown by the consumers and on the other hand so many labels in tourism exist that it is much effort for the certified companies to educate the customer that he is convinced that the TOURcert certificate is more trustful and serious than others.

The only negative consequence which was recognized by the tour operators through the certification process was the process itself, because for the smaller companies like the interviewed ones it was very cost intensive and time consuming and they all had to put a lot of effort into it (TO1,TO2,TO4,Q19).

Finally the companies should share their point of view, if they think that potential consumers get influenced by the certificate. It is conspicuous that all tour operators have a different perception about the power of the certificate. Some think that it is too early to measure the implications of the certificate and the social responsibility is still an unknown issue, hence they think that the label will not influence potential customers (TO4,Q17). Furthermore they noticed that they need to educate the consumers by the first contact and for them price and quality are still the overall criteria in the decision making process (TO2,Q17). The question comes up, if a certificate generally can be an important criterion in the decision making process.

“I think it is very idealistic. Primary consumers want to book a holiday and not collect so much information and spent so much time about sustainability and CSR. But if it is well known enough it could assist in the decision making process” (TO5,Q17).

“Yes, because there are so many products existing and easy to access through the new media, so there is nothing better than something is tested before and documented by a certificate” (TO1,Q17).

This indicates that the tour operators are not able to evaluate exactly the influence of the TOURcert certificate and they are generally not clear in their mind to what extent a certificate can help them to increase bookings. One tour operator also mentioned that the consumers should not book with them, because of the certificate (TO3,Q17), but they also do marketing with the certificate. In the author’s point of view this is contradictory, because if you use something for marketing the goal should be to increase sales and additionally the question comes up about the sense of getting certified.

4.5 Certification in tourism in the consumers’ perspective

Certificates have different levels of significance for the consumers, some of them are looking for certificates and others stated that it is always a problem for consumers, if you don’t know what is behind a label it is hard to trust them (C1,C2,C5,Q38). During the interviews the author recognized just two different perceptions of certification in tourism on the one hand the interviewed consumers know none (C1,C3,C5,Q39) and on the other hand some

consumers know that there are some existing, but they were not able to tell the name or what it was standing for (C2,C4,Q39). Nevertheless they all agreed that certificates in tourism are useful in their point of view, because tourism products are not tangible and people can't touch them before they purchase them, therefore tourism products are trust products and certification is helpful (C1,C3,Q40). However the consumers also mentioned, that it must definitely be clear what is certified and what the alternatives are as well as being internationally valid, because this is the basis for comparing products (C4,C5,Q40). In summary all interviewed consumers stated that a certificate like TOURcert could influence their decision to a certain extent, if they are completely sure that the certificate is trustful and transparent, because then the consumers see the certificate as kind of a guarantee for good quality (C1,C3,Q41).

“A certificate could influence me, because I can be sure about certain attributes of the product like sustainability. On the other hand I would not actively search for certificates and it would be not a negative impact if a company has no certificate.” (C4,Q41).

This indicates that the Tourcert and other certificates in tourism might not lead to a competitive advantage, it is more a nice side effect than an important criterion in the decision making process. However it is difficult to say what the most important criterion is, probably you cannot speak from one criterion, but for the consumers it is essential which alternative is the best for him in a particular situation and where he can get the best quality for his amount of money (C3,Q31).

In the author's point of view certificates in tourism, especially the TOURcert certificate have primary company internal advantages like improvement from company structures and processes in order to save costs or check the company's performance. If this possible improvement is in relation to the costs of the certification process is disputable in the author's perspective.

5. Conclusion

The present thesis deals with the questions “*Why do tour operators engage in CSR, getting certified by the TOURcert CSR certificate and what the implications for them and the consumers are*“, as well as “*What are the perceptions from consumers concerning CSR and certification in tourism and to what extent match their expectations on a CSR certified tour operator with the tour operators’ supposed implications*”

With the support of the ten qualitative interviews (5 with tour operator representatives and 5 with potential consumers), which were done by the author, the study indicates that there is potential for CSR related travel products. Furthermore the current thesis illustrates that in the field of CSR a huge amount of different interpretations of the term CSR exist, in the eyes of both the tour operators and the consumers. Hence confusion results, which makes it difficult for the demand as well as the supply side to increase awareness of that niche product. In the author’s point of view that might be one of the main reasons, why it is difficult to establish CSR related products on the tourism market, although all stakeholders agree that it is an appealing form of traveling nowadays. The following figures should summarize key findings of the two research questions:

Figure 5 Summary of research question 1

Why do tour operators engage in CSR, getting certified by the TOURcert CSR certificate and what the implications for them and the consumers are?

Why CSR?

- Handle things differently
- Companies' focus on social and ecological aspects and providing sustainable products
- Benefits in contracting
- Altruistic intentions / "window dressing"
- Internal improvements and saving costs

Why Tourcert?

- Trustful documentation of their way of working
- Improving internal procedures through certification process

Implications for Tour operators

- Improved company structure and more efficient way of working
- Better included staff in the company's philosophy
- Certified tour operator are more welcome for the press

Implications for the consumer

- *Maybe* support in the decision making process
- *Maybe* quality indicator (no greenwashing)

Source: own figure developed by the author

Figure 6 Summary of research question 2

What are the perceptions from consumers concerning CSR and certification in tourism and to what extent match their expectations on a CSR certified tour operator with the tour operators' supposed implications

Consumer perceptions concerning CSR in tourism:

- Tour operator gives something back to the local community
- Just a marketing instrument as a tool for profit maximization
- More authentic holiday experience
- Taking care of the environment and local people
- Appealing from of traveling in future

Consumer perceptions concerning certification in tourism:

- No certificates are well-known or what is behind the certificate
- Useful in tourism, because of the intangibility of tourism products
- Could be a quality indicator, if they can be sure that it is trustful
- No competitive advantage

Consumer expectations on a CSR certified tour operator:

- Clear distinction from an ordinary holiday
- Tour must be logical sustainable from A to Z
- High risk of disappointment
- Must be experience something new and unknown
- Same like on any other tour (value for money)

Source: own figure developed by the author

It is noticeable that a kind of marketing boost or brand awareness is missing as an implication of the TOURcert certificate. In the author's point of view that is an interesting result, because according to theory one of the main reasons to get certified was to use the certificate as a promotion tool. In the case of the TOURcert certificate the interviewed tour operators mentioned that they had definitely not recognized an advantage in terms of marketing or brand awareness because of the certificate. On the one hand a reason might be the

inscrutable situation about labels and certificates in tourism with a lack of transparency and on the other hand because of the quite unknown term CSR and the different interpretations. This study indicates that one of the major tasks of the certified tour operators as well as the certification body is to put effort into increasing the awareness of the certificate. In the author's perspective this is the assumption for a successful long term implementation of the certificate, otherwise the TOURcert certificate becomes simply one among lots of others. Furthermore customers' awareness of the certificate is also an assumption to measure the implications for potential consumers and that is the reason why the author decided that the implications for consumers of the TOURcert certificate are *maybe* a quality indicator or a helpful tool in the decision making process.

This thesis can be seen as a starting point for further investigations concerning how to increase awareness of CSR or TOURcert in the public, especially because of the fact that the interviewed consumers of this study have mentioned that they are open-minded for CSR related travel products, but they have never recognized such offers in the press or internet.

In the author's point of view it is difficult to answer the question, if a certified tour operator could fulfill the customers' expectations, because of the different understandings of CSR. Furthermore the TOURcert certificate is quite new and that means it might be difficult to evaluate all implications of the certificate in such a short period of time. However, through the transparency of the certificate, the consumer can check for himself, if TOURcert understands the same under the term CSR, however this implies that the consumer is proactive and willing to search for information.

Another finding of this study is that both sides agreed that a certificate like the TOURcert, although it is more trustful than other ones, might be no key criterion for the decision making process, however it could assist. This raises the question for the author, if the benefits for a certificate are in a suitable relation comparing to the costs and time of the certification process. This could also be an interesting topic for further research within in the field of certification in tourism.

The author is aware that the relatively small sampling of 10 qualitative interviews and the snowball sampling can be seen as a weakness of the thesis. Furthermore because of the fact that qualitative interviews were done and the tour operators were just asked about the TOURcert certificate, limitations which not allow generalizing the findings can be found, but that was never the goal of the thesis. Nevertheless the present thesis might be a good starting point for other studies in connection with CSR and certification in tourism.

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Appendix

Questions for face to face interviews consumers

- Have you changed your purchase behavior in the last few months
- Are you looking for more environmental friendly products, or Fair trade
- What kind of travel you did in the last time? What's your favorite / dislike
- How do you decide about a tour / tour operator?
- How do you search for information?
- What is influencing you're information search process / decision
- Too much information?
- What kind of doubts do you have my choosing a tour / tour operator / product
- How would you reduce or eliminate these doubts?
- What is the most important criterion in your decision making

- What do you understand under the term CSR?
- Do you know anything about social responsible tour operators or activities?
- What do you think about social responsible travel?
- Who should take responsibility in tourism in your point of view?
- Why would you do / or don't do such a tour?
- What do you expect from such a tour?

- What significance having certificates for you?
- Do you know some certificates in tourism? Tourcert?
- Do you think certification in tourism is useful? Why / Why not?
- Could a certificate influence your decision why / why not?

Questions for telephone Interviews with different tour operators

- Can you give me some more detailed information about [tour operator] ?
- What do you understand under the term CSR?
- Why do you engage in CSR and why do you think it is important?
- Why do you decided to make CSR the overall concept of the tour operator?
- Can you explain or describe some of your CSR activities?
- How is in your point of view the market for CSR related travel products?
How see potential customers your engagement in CSR.
- Do you think you have a competitive advantage, because of engaging in CSR?
- Do you have any problems because of CSR? (e.g. higher costs of products, staff)
- Isn't CSR just another fashion or means of conveying the impression to do something for the environment? (Why not?)
- There are so many labels and certificates in tourism. Most of the customers can't separate or evaluate them. How do you see the situation?
- Why did you decide to get CSR certified? (Main reasons, sub reasons)
- What are in your point of view the benefits of a certificate? (company vs. customer)
- To what extend were the benefits expected before the implementation? (are the expectations met, new benefits, expected benefits not matched?)
- What is the message of the certificate for your (potential) customers?
- Do you think potential customers get influenced by the certificate and why?
- Have anything changed after you got certified?
- How is in your point of view the future of the development of CSR in tourism?
- Where do you see space for improvements regarding to certification for tour operators?