

Master Thesis

Green meetings – ecolabelling of sustainable events in conference and business tourism

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Abstract

Conference and business tourism is of increasing economic importance and the negative environmental impact of its associated events is significant. One method to make these events more sustainable is the so-called ecolabelling of green meetings. Ecolabelling is a common tool for the advancement of sustainability in the tourism industry and empirical research has been dedicated to the perception of ecolabels, as well as incentives and inhibitors of joining ecolabelling schemes. For the special segment of green meetings such research is pending, therefore this study is dedicated to the perception of ecolabelled green meetings and their ecolabelling process.

As a case study serves the scientific conference 'Forests for People 2012' hosted at the Congress Centrum Alpbach in Tyrol, Austria, which was awarded with the governmental run 'Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings'. A set of qualitative and quantitative research methods is employed to investigate the perception of the congress facility manager, the organisation team, and the conference attendees. The manager of the congress facility and the green meeting appointee of the organisation team are interviewed via expert interviews and their transcripts analysed with extraction. For the conference attendees a standardised questionnaire and statistical analysis is used.

The results reveal the level of awareness concerning the existence of the ecolabel and the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting including its associated benefits. Further the perception of the ecolabelling process itself, the organisation team's reasons pursuing ecolabelling, as well as the congress facility's role in the ecolabelling process and limitations of encouraging environmentally friendly travel are reported. It is recommended that future research investigates green meetings and their ecolabelling process on a broader scope, to get hold of the experiences of various green meeting attendees, organisation teams, and congress facilities.

Kurzfassung

Die wachsende wirtschaftliche Bedeutung von Konferenz- und Geschäftstourismus und die damit verbundenen Events, gehen mit negativen Konsequenzen für die Umwelt einher. Eine Methode diese Events nachhaltiger zu gestalten, ist die sogenannte Ökozertifizierung von Green Meetings. Ökozertifizierung, auch Ecolabelling genannt, ist weitverbreitet um Nachhaltigkeit in der Tourismusbranche zu fördern. Empirische Forschung hat sich mit der Wahrnehmung von Ecolabels, sowie Anreizen und Hemmungsgründen für bzw. gegen Ökozertifizierung von Tourismusbetrieben auseinandergesetzt. Für das spezielle Segment von Green Meetings sind solche Forschungen noch ausständig.

Als Fallbeispiel dient die wissenschaftliche Konferenz „Forests for People 2012“, die im Congress Centrum Alpbach in Tirol abgehalten und mit dem staatlich geführten „Österreichischen Umweltzeichen für Green Meetings“ ausgezeichnet wurde. Mittels eines Sets qualitativer und quantitativer Forschungsmethoden, wurde die Wahrnehmung des Kongresszentrumsmanagers, des Eventorganisationsteams, und der Konferenzteilnehmer erforscht. Die Wahrnehmung der ersten beiden Akteure wurde mittels Experteninterview und Extraktionsanalyse erhoben. Für die KonferenzteilnehmerInnen wurde ein standardisierter Fragenbogen verwendet und statistisch analysiert.

Die Ergebnisse enthüllen den Bekanntheitsgrad des „Umweltzeichens für Green Meetings“, die Wahrnehmung eines als Green Meeting zertifizierten Events, sowie den damit verbundenen Nutzen und Gründe für eine Zertifizierung. Weiterst wird über die Wahrnehmung des Zertifizierungsprozesses und die Rolle des Kongresszentrums berichtet. Zusätzlich wird auf die Akzeptanz der limitierten Möglichkeiten bezüglich umweltfreundlicher Anreise eingegangen. Zukünftige Forschung sollte sich dem Ökozertifizierungsprozess von Green Meetings in einem breiteren Rahmen annehmen, um die Erfahrungen von verschiedenen Green Meeting TeilnehmerInnen, EventorganisatorInnen und Kongresszentren zu beleuchten.

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List of abbreviations

ACB	Austrian Convention Bureau
BMLFUW	Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft
BOKU	Universität für Bodenkultur, Wien
BS	British Standard
CCA	Congress Centrum Alpbach
CIC	Convention Industry Council
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
ECOTRANS	European Network for Sustainable Tourism Development
e.g.	example given
EMAS	Eco-management and Audit Scheme
GMIC	Green Meeting Industry Council
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
ICLEI	International Council for Sustainability
i.e.	id est
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
ISO	International Standard Organisation
MICE	Meetings Incentives Conferences Exhibitions
TSC	Tourism Sustainability Council
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
VISIT	Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

1. Introduction

With the Rio Earth Summit 1992, the need for sustainable development within the tourism industry was publicly communicated. Event tourism including conference and business tourism is an emerging industry, thus its environmental impact and the need to turn to more sustainable events increases too. Applying principles and practices of sustainable niche tourism on to mass tourism, is considered to enable the transformation of mass tourism towards sustainability.

Research dedicated to the impacts of events resulted in various sustainable event frameworks, some focus specifically on events associated with conference and business tourism. Recently the instrument of ecolabelling is also available for so-called green meetings and green events.

When I was attending a fair on green meetings and events in Vienna, Austria („Messe für Green Events and Meetings Steiermark und Kärnten 24.10.2012”), I witnessed green washing at its best. Amongst the numerous exhibitors claiming to be ‘green’, only two stalls advertised congress facilities that were ecolabelled. This exemplifies how conference and business tourism is increasingly under pressure to offer sustainable alternatives, and therefore is subject to green washing. Ecolabelling for green meetings can truly promote sustainability in conference and business tourism, and help to control green washing through the external verification of environmental friendly measures.

Next to others, voluntary ecolabelling is long considered to be a promising instrument for the advancement of sustainability in the tourism industry. Ecolabels give information on the environmental characteristics of a product and thereby are ought to encourage the production and consumption of sustainable products. As sustainable products, in tourism and other industries alike, are considered as a beneficial market niche, ecolabels are used for product differentiation and image reasons as well. Thereby a competitive advantage can be achieved.

Especially in Europe there are many different ecolabels resulting in consumer confusion up to their total ignorance. Their effect of steering consumer demand and encouraging tourism facilities to implement environmental friendly measures is questioned. Further, empirical research reveals that tourism facility managers are discouraged of joining ecolabelling schemes, owing to their perception of required resource intensity. Amongst advocates of ecolabels, value driven motivations and financial savings through eco-efficiency are considered to be main reasons to pursue ecolabelling.

In order to further encourage the proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings, it is crucial to understand how an ecolabelled green meeting itself and the ecolabelling process are perceived. As no English or German research has been found, this paper is intended to shed light on the issue. It will be investigated how ecolabelling for the special segment of green meetings is perceived amongst the three main stakeholders: congress facility management, the event organisation team, and the conference attendees. Against this background the following will be discussed:

- What is the level of awareness concerning the ecolabel's existence?
- How is an ecolabelled green meeting perceived?
- What are reasons to ecolabel a green meeting?
- How is the ecolabelling process perceived and which role do congress facilities and organisation teams play in the ecolabelling process?
- What are the environmental improvements of ecolabelled green meetings?

The literature review is split up in two parts. First, the instrument of ecolabelling in tourism and second, the field of green meetings and events are investigated.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ecolabelling in tourism

2.1.1. Sustainable tourism

Human impact on earth is significant. Resources are depleted, the climate is changing as a result of global warming, caused by rising green house gas levels coming from human activities. Global wealth is not distributed equally resulting in poverty, the world's population is growing, and consumption patterns are changing (SLOAN et al. 2009a, 1f). These challenges for the future existence of humans are addressed with the concept of sustainable development, considering environmental, economic and social dimensions to '*...meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*' (WCED 1987, 43). The concept of sustainable development gained increased attention and there exists an international consensus on the need to integrate environmental issues into production and consumption habits. Thus sustainable consumption and production methods are encouraged (LAVALLÉE and PLOUFFE 2004, 349).

Tourism is the third largest economic activity after oil and automobiles and one of the fastest growing industries. Focus has mainly been on economic benefits, whereas socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism have been neglected, resulting in environmental degradation (FURQAN et al. 2010, 64). Environmental impacts can be categorised in physical and psychological, direct and indirect. Further they can happen locally and individually, but add up globally (GÖSSLING 2002, 284ff). From a global perspective there are five major impacts on the environment:

- Change of land cover and land use: land alteration, accommodation, traffic infrastructure, leisure activities, indirect alterations such erosion;
- Use of energy and its associated impacts: transport, accommodation, activities;
- Exchange of biota over geographical barriers and the extinction of wild species;
- The exchange and dispersion of diseases such as travellers' diarrhoea, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases and other;

- Psychological consequences of travel: changes in human-environmental relations, cosmopolitisation, environmental consciousness, and intercultural encounters (GÖSSLING 2002, 284ff).

Next to these five aspects water scarcity is an issue of concern. There are many regions that have to face water scarcity and tourism often accelerates existing problems, through a shift in demand and higher use per capita (GÖSSLING 2002, 284).

An elementary issue of concern are green house gas emissions. Tourism is estimated to create about 5% of total emissions, primarily from transportation (75%) and accommodation (21%), coming from air-conditioning and heating systems. Travel is a key component of tourism, thus impacts affecting global warming largely depend on patterns in air travel (BUCKLEY 2011, 402; GÖSSLING 2002, 287). The growing rates of international and domestic travel, trends to travel further and over shorter periods of time, as well as a raise in energy-intense transportation, such as car travel over train and bus, are reasons for an increase in emissions. Over the next 30-50 years green house gas emissions from the tourism sector will grow substantially mainly coming from aviation if business-as-usual continues (UNEP 2011, 421). Many travel agents, airlines and car rental companies sell carbon offsets, a physical measure to reduce atmospheric concentrations of green house gases. However, there is only little evidence that they really do so and only 1% of travellers buy offsets and it seems that travellers do not trust them (BUCKLEY 2011, 403).

Depicting the impacts tourism can have, especially in the transport sector, it is safe to say that tourism significantly contributes to global environmental change. Therefore the transformation of the tourism industry towards sustainability should lie in it's own interest (GÖSSLING 2002, 299).

In the late 80s the terms 'green tourism' or 'ecological tourism' were used by scholars and referred to tourism, which should benefit rather than harm the environment and the need for developing an ecologically sound strategy for future tourism emerged (JONES 1987). With increasing knowledge about tourism's negative environmental impacts and sustainable development on global policy agendas, the Rio Earth Summit constitutes a turning point for the need of sustainable development in

tourism. As a result, sustainable forms of tourism emerged. However, the progress made so far is restricted to few niche markets such as ecotourism, nature based tourism, and community based tourism (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 8; YUNIS 2003, 12f).

Scholars argue that true sustainable tourism should not merely remain a niche market but transform mass tourism instead (SHARPLEY 2000, 9). Ecotourism, as a form of sustainable tourism has three primary objectives such as environmental education, conservation, and empowerment of host communities (WEARING and NEIL 2009, 214). Sustainable tourism for the mass market should be built upon the principles of ecotourism: *'The mass tourism industry has become unsustainable and a new paradigm is needed. Ecotourism charts this new direction. The fundamental challenge is to use the principles and practices of ecotourism to infuse and ultimately transform the entire tourism industry'* (HONEY and STEWART 2002, 8). Sustainable tourism refers to tourism activities that can be maintained, or sustained, indefinitely in their social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts. It is not considered to be a special form of tourism but rather include all forms of tourism, that want to become more sustainable and aim to minimise their negative environmental impacts (UNEP 2011, 420). Even though there are definitional difficulties there appears to be a general agreement on the key principles of sustainable tourism, rooted in social, economic and environmental equity (AYUSO 2007, 144).

Definition problems can be traced back to criticism on sustainable development being an oxymoron, owing to the contradiction of pursuing economic growth whilst achieving environmental, social and economic sustainability (ROBINSON 2004, 369ff), being a juxtaposition of two schools of thought (SHARPLEY 2000, 7). Next to this inherent contradiction there are definitional problems given the fuzziness of the terms sustainable development and sustainability, which have different political and philosophical backgrounds: *'...it is perhaps not surprising that different conceptions of the meaning of sustainable development and sustainability tend rather to reflect the political and philosophical position of those proposing the definition more than any unambiguous scientific view'* (ROBINSON 2004, 373f).

This affected the tourism industry, as it is struggling over definitions of sustainable tourism, owing to the different interpretations and perspectives of tourism industry actors, governments, international non-governmental organisations, local communities, environmental activists, and other tourism stakeholders (TEPELUS and CORDOBA 2005, 135). Nevertheless, the lack of an exact definition can also present a political opportunity, as it enables the emergence of various attempts to 'implement sustainability'. The different argumentative backgrounds enable numerous sustainability standards and indicators, and certifications for products and services (ROBINSON 2004, 374). Such standards, in form of voluntary measures, play a crucial role for the advancement of sustainability in the tourism industry, as governments' regulative measures are modest. Thus there is a wide range of different instruments available, promoting sustainable tourism practices (TEPELUS and CORDOBA 2005, 135).

2.1.2. Voluntary instruments for sustainable tourism

The definitional struggles of sustainable tourism made it a difficult industry to regulate. Further, governmental actions are limited to governmental boundaries, owing to the international nature of tourism. As a result, there is no coherent legislation promoting sustainable tourism practices, unlike in other industries (TEPELUS and CORDOBA 2005,135).

Instead of regulative measures, voluntary instruments are considered to be crucial for the advancement of sustainability in tourism. They influence corporate behaviour allowing businesses more motivation, flexibility and innovation than traditional regulation (AYUSO 2007, 145), and ensure the supply of high quality sustainable products (JARVIS et al. 2010, 84). Such instruments are codes of conduct, best practices, environmental performance indicators, ecolabels and awards, and environmental management systems. Voluntary instruments for sustainable tourism are created by non-governmental organisations, industry associations, governments, international financial institutions, United Nations Environment Programme, World Tourism Organisation and similar (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 38; AYUSO 2007, 147ff). The number of voluntary instruments is growing worldwide: there are around 260 voluntary initiatives such as codes of conducts, labels, awards, benchmarking and best practices (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 4).

Since the Rio Earth Summit 1992 there is an global attention on sustainability and numerous certification schemes were created for all kinds of industries to define and measure sustainability (MEDINA 2005, 281). In tourism certification, including the awarded label, were used as early as from the 1900s on, focusing on quality and price, health and safety. In the mid to late 90s numerous tourism ecolabelling schemes emerged to measure environmentally and socially responsible practices. This recent focus is on environmental and socioeconomic sustainability is called 'the three-legged stool of visitor satisfaction'. Now ecolabels are among the hottest topics in the tourism industry (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 3ff).

In times of globalisation and free trade the role of governmental intervention for environmental, social, and economic problems decreased. Instead certification programs and ecolabels as voluntary governance mechanisms are contemporary instruments (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 51f). They are considered to be the most effective instruments, guaranteeing improvement of environmental performance and providing an official recognition of environmental commitment (AYUSO 2007, 154). Further, they meet and balance the needs and interests of a variety of stakeholders such as environmentalists, the tourism industry, host countries, host communities, consumers, and international funding agencies (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 51f). Still, similar as in other industries, certification and ecolabelling are only one part out of many instruments that can be used for to promote sustainability. Both, voluntary and regulative instruments are needed for change (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 23).

2.1.3. The methodology of ecolabelling

Ecolabel is a collective term for environmental quality signs, environmental quality seals, symbols for environmental protection, environmental seals, environmental competitions, environmental prizes and similar terms such as campaigns, environmental plaques, certificates, and eco-seals (SPITTLER and HAAK 2001, 214). Ecolabels must not be confused with environmental quality labels. Ecolabels in tourism identify reduced negative physical, visual, cultural, and social influences of tourism, whereas the environmental quality label refers to the degree of existing environmental (non-) degradation of a destination, irrespective of the cause (MIHALIC 2001, 57f).

The process of obtaining an ecolabel is closely linked to the process of certification and following definition is used in this paper: *‘Currently in the United States, Europe and Latin America, certification within the tourism industry refers to a procedure that audits and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process, service or management system meets specific standards. It awards a logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline criteria or standards that are prescribed by the program’* (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 4f). Certification is only one out of a number of interrelated activities by which a tourism product is evaluated for conformance against a certain standard. The process leading to certification is called conformity assessment. It verifies that a particular product meets a specified level of quality, safety, or sustainable tourism model, and provides information about its characteristics (TOTH 2002, 78f). The activities of conformity assessment are depicted in figure 1.



Figure 1: Conformity assessment (TOTH 2002, 79)

The actors involved in tourism ecolabelling are the tourism market, the applicant, the awarding body, the verifying body and the funding body. Their relationship including the activities of the conformity assessment are depicted in figure 2.

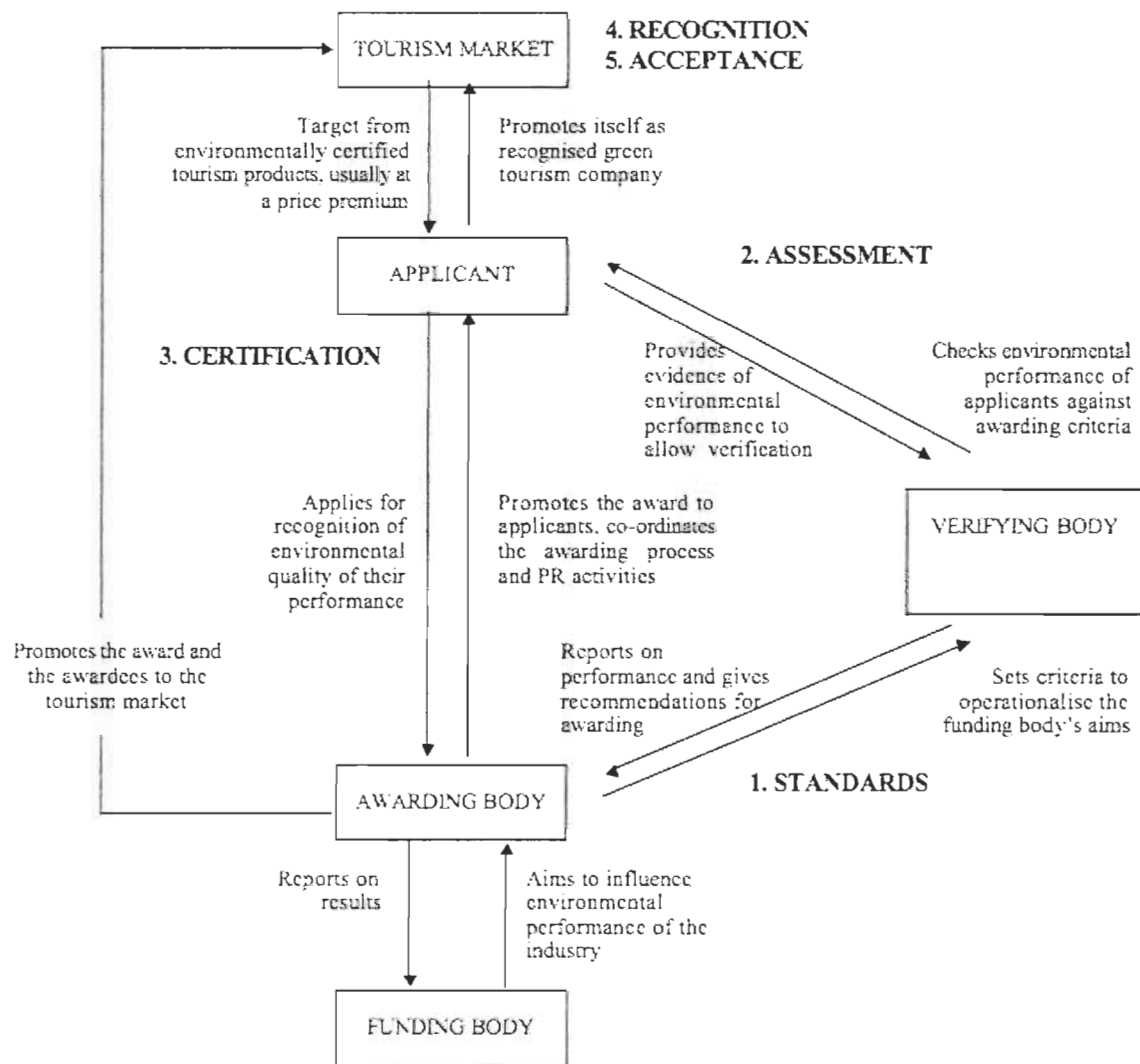


Figure 2: The players in tourism ecolabels (FONT 2002, 201)

The funding body aims to influence the industry and therefore contracts a team or a company that acts as the awarding body, which has expertise in project management, marketing, and lobbying as well as expert knowledge on the criteria of the label. The verifying body prepares the detailed outline of the criteria and develops a manual to verify if the applicants meet the criteria. The applicants usually pay a fee that covers the verification costs, but it barely covers the awarding body costs. When the verification method has been agreed on, the awarding body promotes the ecolabel to make it attractive on the tourism market (FONT 2002, 200).

There are substantial differences between ecolabels affecting their quality. They differentiate through the methodology of generating their standards, the verifying body, and their field of coverage (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 53).

Standards can be performance or process based. Performance based standards are externally determined criteria, which describe what functional or operational characteristics have to be achieved but not how to achieve them. Process based standards or management systems use internally generated management systems for monitoring and improving their procedures, such as the International Standard Organisation's ISO 14000 for environmental management, Eco-Management and Audit Scheme EMAS, and The Natural Step. Many tourism standards are a mixture and include both types of standards (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 53ff). Standards can be voluntary or mandatory, informal or prescriptive. Tourism ecolabels are confronted with the difficulty to create standards for every tourism sub-sector (FONT 2003, 201).

The verifying body for the component assessment, i.e. the determination of the level of conformance to a standard, can be first, second or third party. First party is carried out by the supplier, second party by the purchaser, and third party by an independent party other than supplier or purchaser (TOTH 2002, 83f). Third party labels have a greater credibility as consumers trust labels with independent verification more (D'SOUZA et al. 2007, 371).

Ecolabels differentiate through their field of coverage. They can be applied to conventional tourism, sustainable tourism, and ecotourism and vary according to the strictness of their measures. Ecolabels for sustainable tourism integrate crucial elements of sustainability and environmental protection, whereas ecotourism goes one step further and 'asks' what tourism can do for the community (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 58ff).

Certification should not be confused with accreditation, which is often interchangeably used. Accreditation is a procedure by which '*...an authoritative body formally recognises that a certifier is competent to carry out specific tasks*' (TOTH 2002, 87). Accreditation is a process that certifies the certifiers, as not all certifications are equally though or strict, in order to make them comparable. This is considered to become more important, owing to the demand for an international accreditation body, which regulates different certification schemes as many only have

a local focus. In this paper the term ecolabelling is used for certification, as the result of certification is the awarded an ecolabel.

2.1.2.1. Ecolabels and their role on the tourism market

Ecolabels give information about the environmental management or environmental performance measures and thereby aim to influence tourists' purchasing decision (BUCKLEY 2002, 185). They serve as a direct link between consumers and producers: By providing information about the environmental credentials of a product, they are ought to encourage the demand and the supply for products that cause less stress on the environment (LAVALLÉE and PLOUFFE 2004, 350; REX and BAUMANN 2007, 568). The information provided through ecolabels is considered to result in a 'virtuous circle' where consumers require sustainable products and create a market, which encourages manufacturers to change their production methods to obtain ecolabels. In theory the demand for such products allows producers to transform environmental protection from costs into a source of profit (HALE 1996, 85f).

Tourism ecolabels contribute to sustainability through helping businesses to become more environmentally aware, protect sensitive environmental areas, reduce water usage and improve waste management (JARVIS et al. 2010, 85). Further they contribute through:

- Communicating the environmental qualifications with the hope that tourists develop a positive attitude towards the product or service in question, which then results in a marketing benefit over their competitors;
- Educating tourist regarding their impacts of their actions and decisions,
- directing them to sustainable tourism offers and thereby control tourism's negative impact;
- Encouraging the tourism industry to implement environmental improvements;
- Developing and applying standards for environmental friendly tourism products (FURQAN et al. 2010, 66f).

Ecolabels became increasingly popular in the tourism industry since their emergence in the 80s (SPITTLER and HAAK 2001, 213). In the late 90s there were more than 100 ecolabels for tourism, many of them overlapping in sector and geographical scope

(FONT 2002, 197). Now in North America there are more than 50 certification schemes (BAUMANN 2011, 270) and over 60 ecolabels in Europe (SLOAN et al. 2009b, 142).

Next to the market steering effect of ecolabels, encouraging consumer demand for environmentally sustainable tourism and tourism facility managers to implement environmental improvements, they serve as a tool to access the green market. Tourism ecolabelling has become popular as a result of increasing consumer awareness and preference (HONEY and STEWART 2002b, 51f) and it can provide marketing benefits to those facilities that meet the standards of the label (FONT et al. 2003, 213).

Like in other industries the factor environment is used as an element of market segmenting, targeting and positioning (FONT 2001,1) and ecolabels are an effective instrument to position products in a profitable market niche and to improve a product's image (LAVALLÉE and PLOUFFE 2004, 349f; D'SOUZA 2004, 185). As tourism seeks to gain a unique selling proposition, ecolabels are increasingly used for differentiation and marketing aspects to address target groups and are not only environmentally oriented only (PRÖBSTL and MÜLLER 2012, 4). This use as a marketing tool for improving a product's image and product differentiation can serve as explanation for the increasing popularity of ecolabelling.

It is a known problem, that the profitability of the green market is taken advantage of by many producers in the form of green washing. According to MARCUS (2011, 790) green washing *'...is the unjustified advertising and marketing of products or policies as environmentally friendly to gain an economic advantage. The term also refers to companies claiming an environmentally sound reason for an action that is undertaken for an economic benefit.'* This problem is common in tourism facilities as well. They appear to be involved in sustainable forms of tourism but merely use green language in their marketing (HONEY and STEWART 2002a, 6f). Here, ecolabels can serve as a source of verification for environmental claims, when tourism facilities' are in compliance with sustainability standards.

2.1.2.2. Ecolabels and their role in Europe

There is a concentration of ecolabels in developed countries. Most labels can be found in Europe especially around Germany, Austria and Scandinavia. Australia is unique having one of the strongest ecolabelling schemes, whereas in North America only few can be found (FONT 2001, 8). There is a wide range of different ecolabels available working on local, regional, national or international level, as depicted in figure 3.

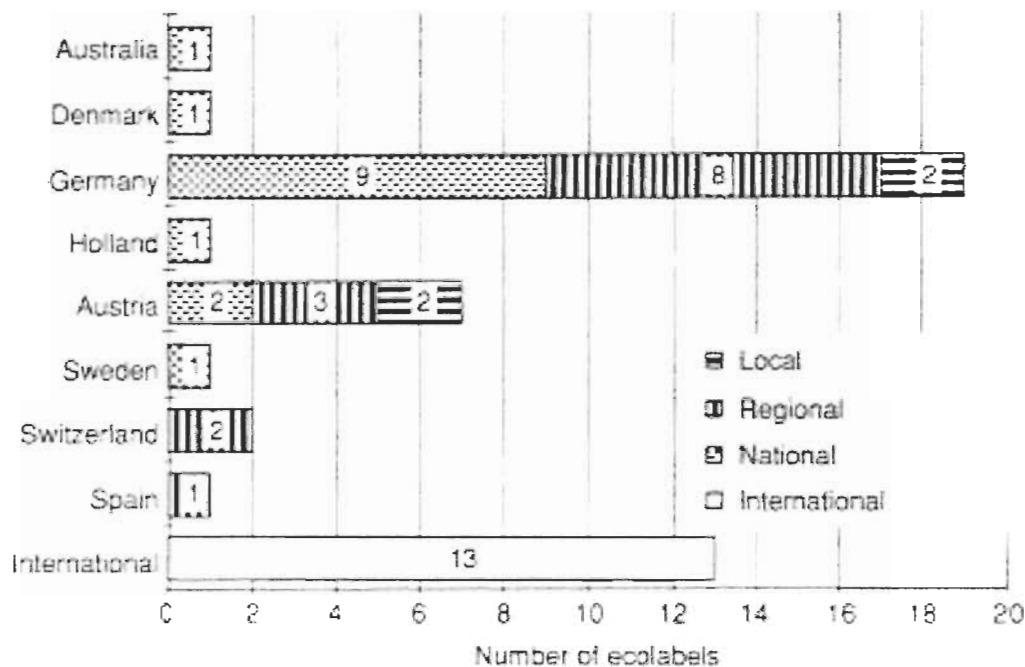


Figure 3: Areas of application of ecolabels (SPITTLER and HAAK 2001, 215)

The high number of ecolabelling schemes in Europe has its roots in the attractiveness of Europe's natural, cultural and historical assets. Composing a significant and growing industry inevitably led to environmental degradation. The development of technical and management solutions and the growing environmental consciousness among tourists and tourism facility managers, created a market for sustainable products (HAMELE 2002, 187ff). Not surprisingly, green claim control regimes in Europe are very effective in countries, where environmental measures in general receive a lot of attention, as depicted in table 1.

Table 1: The effectiveness of green control regimes in Europe (FONT 2001, 2).

Member state	Access to complaints procedures (public/self-regulation)	Level of activity in green complaints (public/self regulation)	Effect on claims, excluding on pack claims	Consumer information
Austria	Good	None	*	Average+
Belgium	-	None/significant	*	Average/poor
Denmark	Good	Very active	**	Very active
Finland	Excellent	Active	**	Active
France	Good/good	Limited	*	?
Germany	Good/good	Active	**	Active
Greece	Fair/fair	None/none	-	Poor
Ireland	-	None	-	Poor
Italy	Fair/good	Limited	*	Poor
Netherlands	Excellent	Very active	**	Active
Portugal	Fair	None	-	Poor
Spain	Fair	None	--	Poor
Sweden	Excellent	Very active	**	Very active
United Kingdom	Fair/good	Active	*	Average

Central to most European labels are environmental criteria whereas labels in less developed countries focus more on social and economic aspects, as ecotourism and other forms of sustainable tourism are considered as important development models. Especially western European countries have strong labour rights protection therefore socioeconomic criteria receive less attention. However, some include criteria such as consumption of local products, organic food, employment to support traditional handicrafts and farming, and generating other benefits for local communities (HAMELE 2002, 187ff).

In Austria there are national, regional and local labels available. The 'Silberdistel' launched in 1988 was a pioneer ecolabel and a model for many other regions in Austria and Germany. The Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism was launched in 1996 being the first official nation-wide ecolabel for tourism in Europe and seems to be best positioned. It has a large number of criteria, independent testing and awarding procedure, making it one of the most sophisticated ecolabels in Europe with nearly 100 complying facilities. Since its launch, regional labels have been in competition. On a national level, the Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism is considered to lead by example, having a uniform and clear system on a long-term basis and providing a certain standard of environmental and social compatibility, where regional ecolabels are superseded (HAMELE 2001, 178; HAMELE 2002, 195f). The Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism is considered to have a transparent communication offering sufficient information online. Further, it demands additional amenities such as a waste management concept for hotels. This can serve as an additional motivation to exceed the minimum criteria, which then can be communicated to the tourist (MÜLLER 2011, 110f).

The large number and variety of available ecolabels in Europe makes it difficult for tourists to identify, which labels are credible concerning their environmental claims. This weakens tourists' ability to take an informed decision when purchasing their holidays. The so-called 'jungle of ecolabels' limits the function for any ecolabel to work effectively. Their legitimacy is interrogated leading to consumer confusion, negative attitudes, and up to the total ignorance of ecolabels (FONT 2001, 6; SHARPLEY 2001, 41ff; BUCKLEY 2002, 186; LÜBBERT 2001, 77; BUDEANU 2007, 504). In order to reduce consumer confusion and ignorance of ecolabels, there have been talks about developing an instrument for the comparison of European ecolabels. The European Commission commissioned a study on how a single European label could be developed, to classify environmental performance of hotels, which gained only limited support from the industry (FONT 2002, 200).

However, the 'jungle of ecolabels' is thought to be curbed through the introduction of a uniform European label (SPITTLER and HAAK 2001, 213f). Such an ecolabel could facilitate a harmonisation on the European level by providing only one official ecolabelling system for different tourist destinations (HAMELE 2001, 185). This is

welcomed by German tourists, who prefer an overall ecolabel for tourism products, instead of several single labels as this is considered to be clearer and easier to compare (LÜBBERT 2001, 80f).

Efforts to harmonise labels have been made by the World Travel and Tourism Council with their 'Green Globe 21', which is the first and only attempt that is globally applicable to all forms of tourism (KOEMAN et al. 2002, 299f). Other initiatives for harmonisation are Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism (VISIT), Tourism Sustainability Council (TSC), and the European Network for Sustainable Tourism Development (ECOTRANS) with its ECO-TIP database (HAMELE 2002, 188). Studies have been conducted on the feasibility of a Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, constituting a body that raises the standards of ecolabelling programmes for tourism and delivers benefits from joint marketing, training and information sharing (FONT et al. 2003).

Despite research and attempts to supersede different ecolabels according to a certain area, comparing tourism products' ecolabels remains a challenge. Europe has a great diversity of tourism but ecolabelling schemes rely on homogenous product groups, which cannot be easily compared between each other (HAMELE 2002, 188). Further, it has been found that international and national organisations dedicated to the harmonisation of ecolabelling schemes, face the problem that key terms used for defining criteria often have multiple and contested meanings, which further complicates the issue (MEDINA 2005, 293).

2.2.3. Perception of ecolabels

Consumers rather than government intervention are considered to create pressure for environmental improvements and move the demand and supply towards environmental friendly products (HALE 1996, 91). As ecolabels depend on consumer choice the responsibility for improving environmental management in tourism lies within the purchasing decision of the individual consumers (BUCKLEY 2002, 192).

Several studies show that consumers are willing to change their consumption behaviour to preserve the environment (D'SOUZA 2004, 179). As ecolabels are intended to influence consumption behaviour, tourists have to consider them in their

purchasing decision. Thus it is crucial that they reach their target group (HAMELE 2001, 182).

Consumers need to have confidence in the credibility of ecolabels and producers need to believe that obtaining an ecolabel will benefit their sales (Hale 1996, 91; TOTTH 2002, 92). Therefore a successful ecolabel has to be able to clearly and reliably differentiate between products with high and low environmental impact. Further a label needs both 'guts and teeth', meaning that there are substantive criteria as well as a transparent and effective audit and enforcement (BUCKLEY 2001, 19). Even though ecolabels are a popular instrument to shift tourism demand to sustainable products, research reveals controversial results about their effectiveness in promoting sustainable tourism. There are two issues of concern: First, there exists consumer confusion as a result of the high number of available ecolabels, which fail to reach their purpose and annoy, and second they fail to fulfil their purpose of leading to environmental purchasing (BUDEANU 2007, 504). In order to successfully influence consumers and producers, research on the perception of ecolabels in tourism is essential.

2.2.3.1. Perception of ecolabels among tourists

Even though ecolabels are a market-based instrument that is dependent on consumer demand, consumers' exact reaction to them is relatively unknown. Ecolabels' influence on consumer behaviour is only poorly researched in the field of tourism (REISER and SIMMONS 2005, 590). The general increase of public environmental awareness does not necessarily translate into a higher demand for tourism ecolabels, as the level of concern over tourism is generally lower and relevant environmental information on tourism products is more difficult to obtain and less clear than for other industries (BUCKLEY 2002, 185).

Next to low environmental awareness concerning tourism, research on the consumer demand of sustainable tourism is also subject to a social desirability bias. Many consumers state an intention to buy sustainable tourism products but in reality do not and focus more on comfort, quality, and price (JARVIS et al. 2010, 86). In fact only few tourists base their purchasing decision on ecolabels, as considerations such as the destinations themselves are more important. Amongst German tourists

environmental protection was found to have only low priority, because as individual tourist they do not feel responsible for the environment but are interested in the current condition of the destination instead (LÜBBERT 2001, 80).

Ecolabels suffer from a general lack of consumer awareness. For example only 3 - 19% of tourists in Germany and 6% in the Netherlands are aware about the existence of ecolabels (BUDEANU 2007, 504), and 69,5% of the Spanish population are unaware of the existence of ecolabelling schemes in tourism (AYUSO 2007, 151). Additionally, sometimes the price is often perceived higher than for non-ecolabelled products, which presents another barrier for purchase (JARVIS et al. 2010, 85).

Further, the plethora of ecolabels makes it problematic for tourists to identify the product with lower environmental impact: *'There are too many ecolabels with different meanings, criteria, geographical scope, confusing messages, limited expertise and expensive systems, only partly meeting the requirements of the process of compliance assessment'* (FONT 2002, 203), and scholars refer to them as *'... common but uncoordinated'* (BUCKLEY 2002, 183). Apart from that, consumers are often sceptic towards ecolabelling, because of green washing and therefore do not consider ecolabels in their decision process (JARVIS et al. 2010, 89).

Another reason for the low effectivity of ecolabels might be a lack of considering consumer attitudes and requirements, when developing ecolabels. Thus research should take them into account to ensure that they function effectively and to avoid the risk that the label will not be recognised properly (LÜBBERT 2001, 71).

2.2.3.2. Perception of ecolabels among tourism facility managers

Joining an ecolabelling scheme is associated with several benefits. A list of these benefits attributed to the certification for hotels is provided in table 2. It is considered to be applicable to other tourism subsectors as well (TOT 2002, 93).

Table 2: Certification benefits and incentives (modified after TOT 2002, 93f)

Certification benefits and incentives	
Satisfaction	Many hoteliers feel the need to conserve energy and protect the environment and to be responsible community members. Certification standards provide guidelines that indicate how they can contribute back to the surroundings that provide such rich benefits by reducing ecological impacts and improving health and safety
Sustainability	Hoteliers with vision want to ensure a future for their businesses. Their objectives include cost reduction, income growth, superior management practices, and continuity of tourism in the region. Certification programs help hotels to improve their management techniques and to find the best route towards sustainability
Maintenance of markets	Certification enables hoteliers to focus on the primary factors affecting customer satisfaction. Achieving a requisite level of performance decreases complaints from clients and from clients to their travel agents and tour operators, with long-term direct benefits to all parties. Certification distinguishes operations and products in the market, making them increasingly more competitive
Profitability	Achieving certification requires implementation of practices that conserve resources and reduce direct and indirect costs while improving performance
Public image	Certification improves the image of a hotel in the eyes of clients, friends, suppliers, government, and the general public. Certification results in prestige, pride, and publicity.
Dialogue	Certification programs motivate hoteliers, health professionals, and environmentalists to work together in the search for equitable solutions to problems and permits sharing of information and ideas
Credit opportunities	Certified hotels are viewed favourably by banking institutions. A hotel that effectively manages safety, health, and hygiene

	conditions, conserves resources, and takes into account security issues and disaster planning has competitive advantages when it comes to opportunities for credit
Insurance costs	Insurers recognise that certification attests to a level of commitment and achievement that can have a positive effect on risk assessment, which translates into lower rates
Reduced liability	The systematic assessments of procedures and upgrading of operations that characterises certification programs can significantly reduce the potential for accidents, discharge, and other incidents. Insurers take into account in calculating insurance premiums
Capable and dedicated workers	At certified hotels workers receive adequate training, equipment, and motivation. This translates into worker pride and efficiency and thus a higher level of competitiveness
Proactive and participatory	In contrast to government regulations, certification is voluntary, market-oriented, and independent. In this way, it allows hoteliers to participate actively in the search for solutions to health, environmental, and management challenges and permits citizens, scientists, and all other sectors to participate. Many times it is more innovative and advanced than government regulatory processes
Technology transfer	Certification programs facilitate technical discussions at all levels, strive for the best available technology, and provide incentives for the development of clean and innovative operating procedures

Despite the benefits associated certification and thus with joining an ecolabelling scheme, tourism facility managers remain sceptic and tourism literature focused on identifying incentives and obstacles of going green. Empirical studies about the perceived benefits and challenges of joining an ecolabelling scheme, as well as research on the motives and barriers behind adapting environmentally friendly practices of tourism facilities, have been published and are listed in table 3 (Ayuso 2007, 146).

Table 3: Commonly identified incentives and obstacles for the implementation of environmental practices in hotels (modified after Ayuso 2007, 146)

Incentives	Obstacles
Financial gain	Costs too high
Ethical stance	Lack of time and knowledge
Response to consumer demand	Jeopardise consumer satisfaction
Improved hotel image	Difficult to involve staff
Marketing advantage	Belief that hotels are not responsible

The potential for a marketing benefit is often cited as the key incentive for ecolabelling, which includes an improved company image, a competitive advantage, and destination marketing opportunities. However, this benefit is also the most contested one in research: *'The conflicting evidence regarding the marketing benefits of certification mirrors the confusion over whether consumers are sufficiently interested in sustainable tourism and hospitality products to change their purchasing behaviour'* (JARVIS et al. 2010, 85). In their study other important reasons were reported such as the reduction of environmental impacts, financial considerations, public relations, personal moral responsibility, and political aspects, suggesting that other factors than the marketing benefit have significant influence on tourism facilities' transformation to sustainability. Another study conducted in the German speaking alpine region, investigated hotel managers decision-making process when choosing an ecolabel. The majority of the hotel managers stated that personal principles, the quality of the respective label, and avoiding reproaches of green washing, were reasons why they chose an ecolabel for their hotel. For some hotel managers it was important that it is a governmental run label, as it is considered to be

more reliable and credible. Interestingly, those who used a governmental run ecolabel, marketing benefits were very important (PRÖBSTL and MÜLLER 2012, 9f).

Literature reveals that a feeling of environmental responsibility amongst hotel managers is a strong motivator for going green, as in facilities committed to environmental measures, altruistic and financial factors were found to be main reasons for their implementation (VERNON et al. 2003, 66). Environmental responsibility refers to the attitudes of individuals and organisations towards environmental problems. It can be understood as the awareness of environmental problems caused by tourism and the aim to strive for behaviour with minimum negative consequences for the natural, cultural and social environments (MIHALIC 2001, 60). This is supported by another study where altruistic factors concerning the environment were crucial for the development of sustainable practices. Such value driven motives, like feeling responsible towards the environment and society, rank high on tourism facility managers' reasons for going green (LEWIS and CASSELLS 2010, 18).

Integrating environmental measures into management activities is often considered to be too complicated, time consuming and expensive to be implemented (VERNON et al. 2003, 61). Inaction concerning the environment is considered to be the result of limited business resources as money, time and expertise are the most critical resources affecting success or failure of sustainable initiatives (HALME and FADEEVA 2001, 160).

Financial savings associated with environmental measures are referred to as eco-efficiency, which is another major driver for their implementation (LEWIS and CASSELLS 2010, 9). For tourism facility managers' level of concern there seems to be a relationship between financial considerations and ethical factors. The higher the environmental concern the more ethically motivated they were, whereas the lower the level of concern, the more financially oriented was their motivation of action. This means that higher levels of concern are manifested in greater levels of action. The relationship is depicted in figure 4 (TZSCHENTKE et al. 2008, 130f).

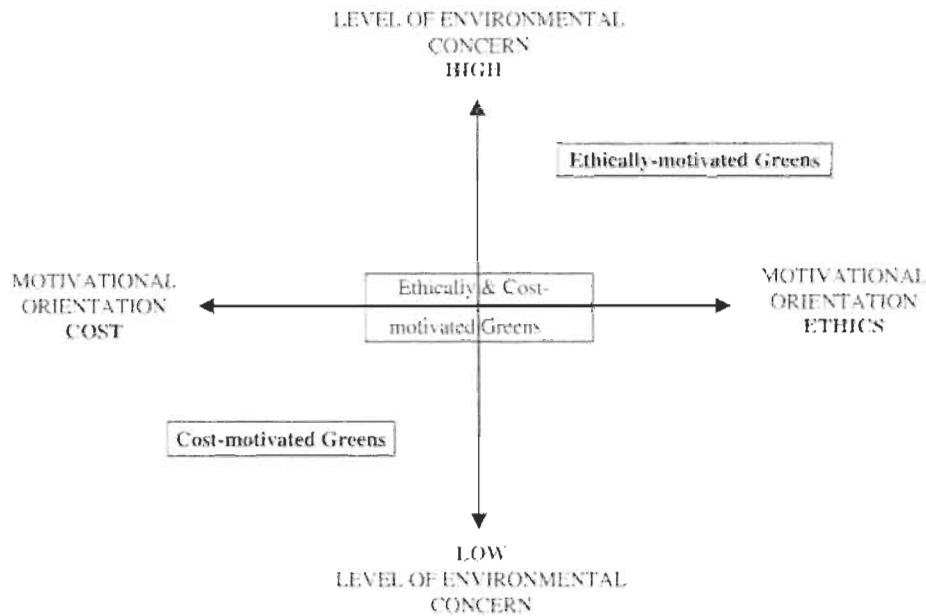


Figure 4: Level of concern and motivational orientation (TZSCHENTKE et al. 2008, 131)

This suggests that a feeling of environmental responsibility is a strong motivator to overcome barriers, such as a lack of resources and to go beyond eco-efficient measures. Further is it suggested, that the more concerned facility managers are, the higher their involvement in environmental protective measures and thus their likelihood of joining a certification scheme.

2.2. Green meetings and events

2.2.1. Conference and business tourism

Events are an integral part of tourism and their special appeal is derived from their uniqueness, which differentiates from fixed attractions (GETZ 1989, 125). Event tourism is only a recent phenomenon but gains increasing importance, as its growth is significant. Events are a spatial-temporal phenomenon, with unique interactions of the setting, people, and management systems. As they are never the same one has to attend to enjoy the experience fully (GETZ 2008, 403). The essential difference between traditional tourism and event tourism is that events are defined through their discontinuity: they are transitory in nature, infrequent in occurrence and limited in time (SMITH-CHRISTENSEN 2009, 23).

Events can be categorised according to their size, scope and sector, or type. They encompass festivals, entertainment, recreation, political and state, scientific, sport and art events (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 3; GETZ 2008, 404). Figure 5 provides a typology of the main categories, of which business, sports and festivals have attracted the most attention from researches and practitioners so far (GETZ 2008, 404).

Cultural celebrations Festivals Carnivals Com-memorations Religious events	Business and trade Meetings, Conventions Consumer and trade shows Fairs, markets	Educational and scientific Conferences Seminars Clinics	Sport competition Amateur/profes sional Spectator/ participant
Political and state Summits Royal occasions Political events VIP visits	Arts and entertainment Concerts Award ceremonies	Recreational Sport or games for fun	Private events Weddings Parties Socials

Figure 5: Typology of planned events (modified after GETZ 2008, 404)

The category of business and corporate events includes meetings, conventions, fairs and exhibitions (GETZ 2008, 404). Business tourism encompasses meetings of all

kinds such as conferences, conventions and exhibitions (LAWSON 1982, 298). Conference tourism is considered as a self-contained tourism segment and in the late 80's it was booming and referred to as 'salesman's dream' (HUGHES 1988). In this paper the term conference and business tourism is used to refer to all kinds of events associated with scientific communities and businesses alike.

Conference and business tourism is a national and international market with an economic significance that is manifested by the construction of the New York Convention Centre, designed to accommodate 85,000 people per day, and similar facilities all over Europe (HUGHES 1988, 235). The high interest in the tourism value of events associated with conference and business tourism, resulted in the fact that almost all major cities own impressive facilities hosting these events (GETZ 2008, 411). Some cities even brand themselves as 'conference cities' or 'congress cities' e.g. Aalborg, Denmark: 'Aalborg – congress and culture city' (HOYER and NAEISS 2001, 462). Also Austria is a popular destination for business tourism and Vienna is branded as congress city. The seventh time in a row, it was awarded the first place as international congress destination next to Berlin, Singapore Madrid, London, Amsterdam, Istanbul and Peking (WIRTSCHAFTSBLATT 2012).

The need to hold face-to-face meetings created a multi-billion dollar meetings industry. In the United States conference and business tourism ranks the 29th in terms of contribution to the gross national product. According to the Union of International Associations, Austria was in the top 25 of international meeting countries in 2005, with a total number of 314 meetings and 3.5% of all meetings, ranked at 8th position (PAXON 2009, 132f). Also governments become increasingly aware of the economic benefits of the so-called MICE industry, standing for meetings, incentives, conventions, and events/exhibitions (GETZ 2008, 411). This new form of tourism is considered as a new source of income for weaker geographic units or regions where the demand for traditional tourism decreased (KARAGIANNIS 2009, 32).

2.2.1.1. Impacts of events

The negative impacts of tourism have long been neglected as research focused mainly on generating economic benefits (FURQAN et al. 2010, 64). As a result of the increasing awareness about environmental and socio-cultural degradations, tourism research finally addressed these issues (GÖSSLING 2002). Event tourism scholars point out that research dedicated to the impact of events should expand in scope and magnitude (GETZ 1989, 137). Event impacts are increasingly investigated and triple bottom line approaches to event sustainability, as well as the event footprint, have been employed in research (GETZ 2008, 419ff). Impacts, positive and negative, of events can be categorised according to the three pillars of sustainability depicted in figure 6. The increasing environmental awareness concerning events is exemplified with the exploration of the potential impacts of mega events, such as the 2010 soccer world cup on climate change (OTTO and HEATH 2009).

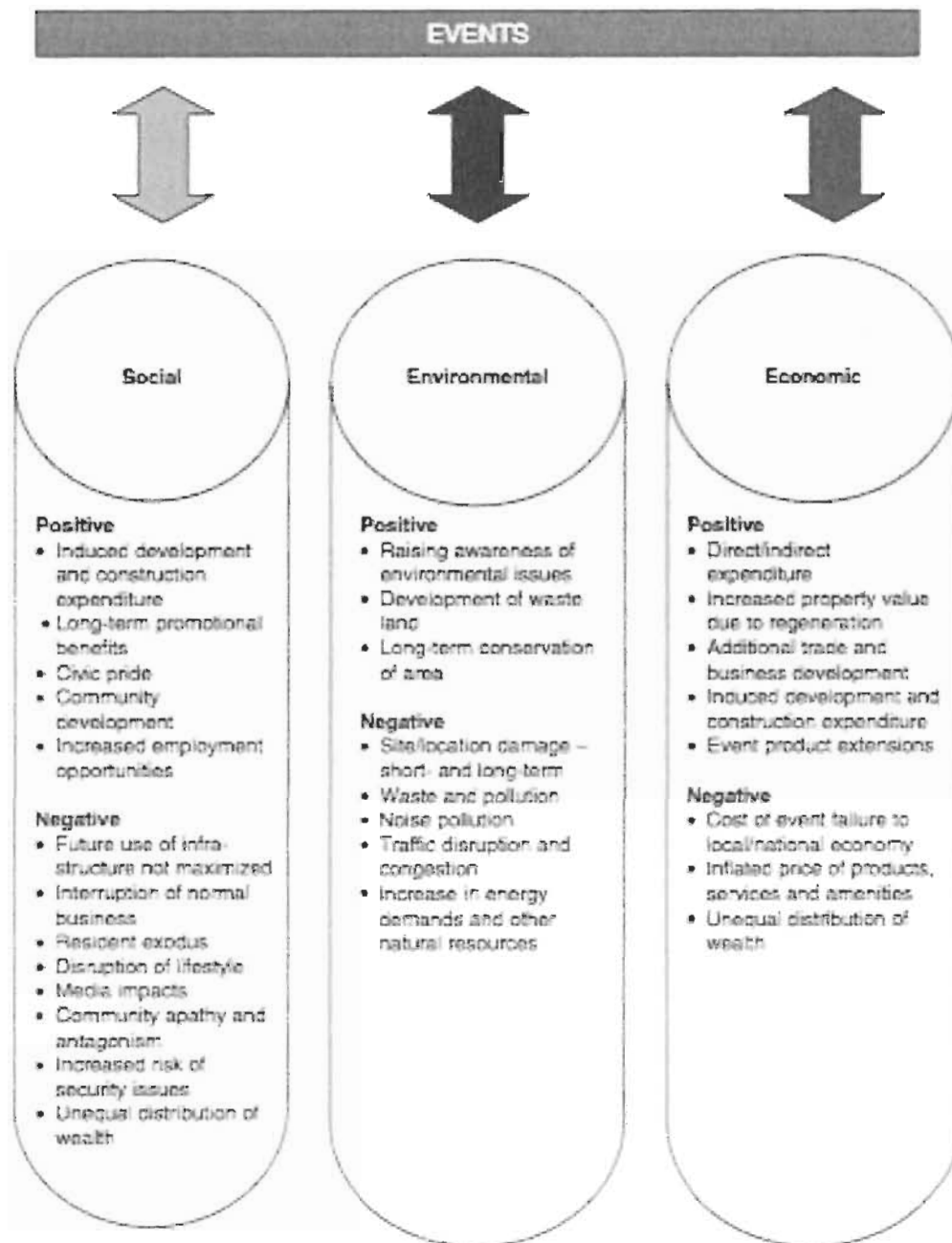


Figure 6: The three pillar impacts of events (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 5)

By now event literature reveals that the greatest need is to pay more attention to events' environmental outcomes, which will lead to better environmental management (GETZ 2008, 421). Efforts to document the environmental impacts of events have been made and can be categorised according to impacts on air quality, water pollution, geological condition, depletion of natural resources, and flora and fauna (DÁVID 2009, 67f).

Events associated with conference and business tourism have significant environmental impacts. Economic activities of knowledge industries are often wrongly mentioned as a positive example for dematerialisation: enabling economic growth whilst reducing material consumption and pollution. But in fact, employees of such industries have to travel a lot and usually with the most energy consuming and environmentally harmful modes of transport (HOYER and NAEISS 2001, 451). Especially scientists dealing with environmental issues reflected over the paradox of being concerned about environmental problems and acting environmental friendly, but at the same time passing through the local airport more than 20 times a year to attend conferences on sustainable development and similar (HOYER 2009, 60).

The environmental impacts of scientific conferences caused through travel by airplane have been investigated (HOYER and NAEISS 2001, 457). The growing rates of international tourist arrivals and domestic travel, trends to travel further and over shorter periods of time, as well as the preference for high energy intense travel, such as flying, are reasons for an increase in energy demand. Over the next 30-50 years green house gas emissions from the tourism sector will grow substantially in a business-as-usual scenario, with emissions mainly coming from aviation (UNEP 2011, 421).

Air transport, especially international, has a significant impact, as the climate change effect of emissions high up in the atmosphere is higher than on the ground, which is called climate forcing. The climate forcing multiplier is estimated 1.8 for international, and 1.3 for domestic air travel (HOYER 2009, 66). Figure 7 depicts the CO₂ emissions of a conference tourist in comparison to the average Norwegian including the climate forcing multipliers.

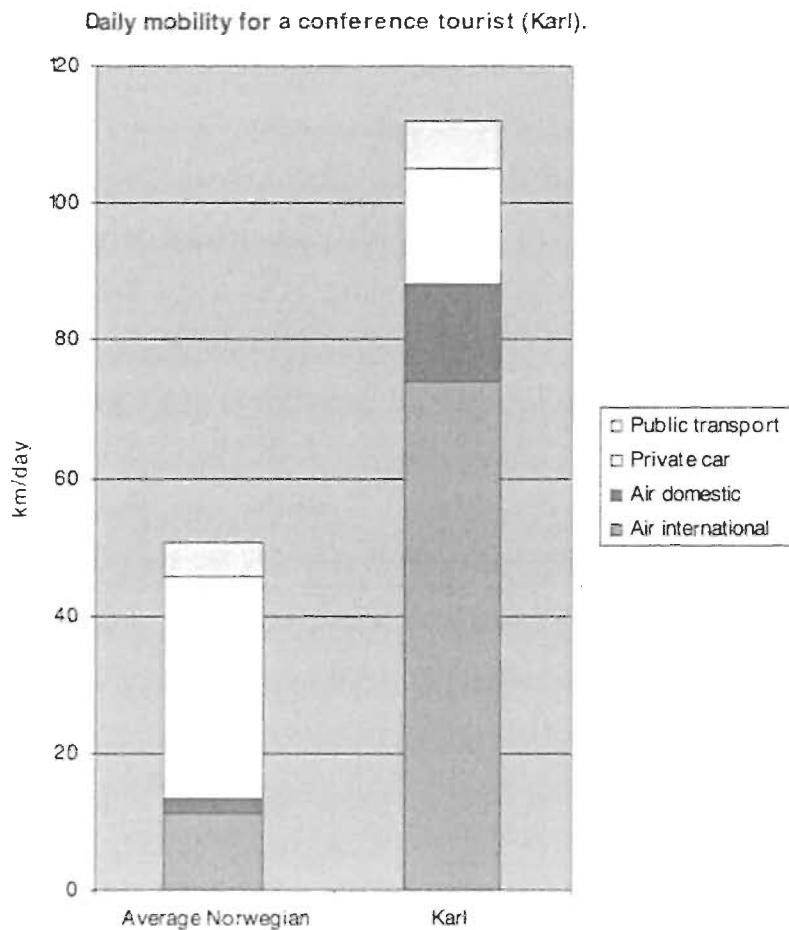


Figure 7: Daily emissions for a conference tourist 'Karl' in comparison to an average Norwegian (HOYER 2009, 59).

Transportation has a key role in the organisation, planning and successful outcome of events. Nevertheless, transportation is not a core focus in event management literature, but rather neglected. Transportation must take a more important role in event literature owing to its significant contribution to emissions (ROBBINS et al. 2007, 303f). This is a serious problem as the factor transportation is considered to be the most crucial contributor to negative impacts of events. Air transport and tourism have grown like 'conjoined twins', no matter if in terms of business travel or holiday travel, and is the very backbone of hotel tourism, event tourism, and conference tourism (HOYER 2009, 58).

Event carbon foot printing, calculating the emissions of an event and targeting climate neutrality through compensating the remaining emissions, which could not be reduced through other measures, is considered a common practice (UNEP 2009, 31). As research has been conducted on the use of carbon foot printing as educative

tool to raise environmental awareness (GOTTLIEB et al. 2012) it can be a useful tool to raise environmental awareness for events. Next to carbon emissions other impacts are significant. Following examples are intended to give an idea about the dimensions of resource use, waste, and emissions:

- According to a report by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) it is estimated that on average an attendee at a three-day meeting uses 3200l of water, produces 27.7kg of waste and uses 21 cans or bottles, and 40 cups and napkins (GUTERMAN 2009, 1169).
- A five day conference with 2500 attendees is considered to use 62 500 plates, 87 000 napkins, 75 000 cups, and 90 000 cans or bottles (AASE 2009, 800).
- According to the Austrian Convention Bureau (ACB 2012a) each conference attendee produces 3.5 kg of residual waste and 5.5 kg paper waste.
- The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 generated 322.59 tonnes of waste and 136 000 tonnes of carbon emissions, 26 tonnes of paper, and needed 11800kl of water and 2485MWh over a period of ten days (UNEP 2009, 10).

2.2.1.2. Sustainable events

The mainstreaming of sustainable tourism into mass tourism is manifested in the 'greening' of other tourism segments that are looking for opportunities to minimise their environmental impact (DIAMANTIS and WESTLAKE 2001, 32). Event tourism encompassing the music and festival industry (BOTTRILL et al. 2010; DÁVID 2009), the sport industry (MALLEN and CHARD 2011; GIBSON et al. 2012), and the meetings industry (UNEP 2009), takes account environmental impacts and aims to become more sustainable.

Reasons for taking action regarding events and environment are:

- Communities increasingly expect this as the activities are highly visible and there is pressure to set a good example especially when working in governmentally owned facilities,
- customers increasingly expect that from hosting facilities,
- it is cost saving, and

- it is a matter of legal concern (PAXON 2009, 137).

Defining a green event is not easy, as there are different terms that are interchangeably used such as 'responsible', 'ecology', 'sustainable'. This variety of terms reflects the different interpretations and vagueness of these approaches (HENDERSON 2011, 247). However, a green event can be considered an event that has a sustainability policy or incorporates sustainable practices into its management and operations (LAING and FROST 2010, 262). Green events are a trend to communicate environmental consciousness, as environmental issues are high on the public agenda and information on impacts and best practices is available (SMITH-CHRISTENSEN 2009, 25). The most important aspects of a green event, sometimes also called environment-conscious event, are depicted in figure 8.



Figure 8: The most important services of environment-conscious events (DÁVID 2009, 71)

A sustainable event management framework should enable improvements according to the three pillars of impacts: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. For the environmental pillar, event activities must consider the source of materials and the materials used in the light of a life cycle analysis. They have to be reusable, recycled or recyclable (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 5f). Sustainable or green event management

frameworks and policies are applied for a wide range of different events. Some major recent examples of event greening according to their own marketing are:

- The Olympics in Australia 2000
- The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002
- The 2006 World Cup in Germany
- ICLEI's World Congress in 2006 in South Africa
- ICLEI's 'Accelerating Now' in Melbourne 2007
- IUCN World Conservation Congress in Spain 2008
- International Ozone Gathering in Doha/Nairobi 2008 (UNEP 2009, 10)

Also the meetings industry is transforming towards sustainability, as the impacts are increasingly known. The environmentally friendlier version of events associated with conference and business tourism are referred to as green meetings. They are defined by the Convention Industry Council (CIC 2012): *'The ideal green meeting is considered to be one that minimises waste and energy use at each stage, from the distance travelled to the type and amount of food and water that's used, the amount of energy expended in lighting and electricity, the amount of paper and plastic avoided and recycled, to the amount of waste left behind.'* There are definitional differences between conferences and meetings depending on their size and duration (HUGHES 1988, 235f). However, in this study the term green meeting is used as an umbrella term for all kinds of events associated with conference and business tourism, which have a sustainability policy or incorporate sustainable practices in their management and operation.

An example for the sustainable management of green meetings concerning the venue, accommodation, catering, the setting-up of the meeting, local transport, and exhibitions is given in table 4 (UNEP 2009, 21ff).

Table 4: Overview on how to reduce environmental impacts (UNEP 2009, 20)

Environmental target	How?
Reduce energy use, and the resulting green house gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select venues and accommodation that implement energy efficiency measure, complying with green building standards and/or use renewable energy sources • Choose location and venue minimising local and long-distance transportation needs for participants and products • Where long-distance travel is unavoidable, offset green house gas emissions • Apply energy-saving practices during the organisation and hosting of the meeting
Reduce materials consumption and waste generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise materials provided to participants and used by service providers (e.g. caterer), before, during and after the meeting • Avoid the use of disposable items, use pre-used/recycled and reusable/recyclable products and reduce packaging needs to a minimum • Separate and recycle waste where possible
Reduce water use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select venues and accommodation that implement water conservation practices and use water efficient appliances • Minimise the distribution of bottled water to participants where possible
Reduce indirect environmental impacts to air, water and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the need to transport food and other products and prefer local organic food • Use products manufactured with or containing fewer harmful substances, such as chlorine-free paper or non-toxic cleaning products

According to the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC 2012a) green meetings are about increasing economic and environmental efficiency by minimising the reuse of resources and reducing the amount of waste produced from meeting activities. As a result of reducing waste and being more efficient, costs are reduced and therefore green meetings do not necessarily need to be expensive. Further they usually do not lead to a reduction of quality and most green meeting efforts go completely unnoticed. However, diet conscious attendees are found to respond positively to healthier, organic, and local food options.

Even though a green meeting does not have to be more expensive than a conventional one, they are often considered to be more expensive. However, that does not necessarily mean that this negatively influences the demand. According to a study by the Travel Industry Association of America, business and leisure travellers are willing to spend 6.5% more for services and products that are provided by environmentally responsible companies (GMIC 2012a).

The benefits of a green meeting are considered to be cost savings, positive reputation in terms of image improvement, environmental innovation, awareness raising, social benefits, influencing decision-making, and spreading best practice within the organisation (UNEP 2009, 10f). According to the Convention Industry Council (CIC 2004) the main benefits of green meetings and events are that they save money and are good for the environment. Further, event greening is considered to transport pro-environmental messages to an audience, which is traditionally not considered as green (LAING and FROST 2010, 264), which is assumed to be the case to green meeting as well.

Despite the benefits associated with hosting a green meeting there are substantial barriers for their implementation. The biggest challenge is that they are considered to be time consuming and cause organisational difficulties (AASE 2009, 800). Further most scientists remain unaware of the effects events can have and therefore remain sceptical to attempts to make a scientific conference sustainable (GUTERMAN 2009, 1169). Furthermore a lack of reliable information or trust i.e. being afraid of green washing, boredom about the 'sustainability issue', perceived implementation costs and compliance, are barriers (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 10). In order to overcome

this, it is suggested that there needs to be a driver of action who is fond of the benefits of green meetings and is able to encourage and motivate others (GUTERMAN 2009, 1169).

In order to avoid that people lose interest in green meetings, research is needed to understand the phenomenon of green events. Therefore a wide range of different events in different countries should be investigated (LAING and FROST 2010, 165). Empirical research should be dedicated to identify success factors and barriers for implementation, to the integration process of green elements into the management, and to the green event goes themselves (LAING and FROST 2010, 65) Understanding their perception is central for effective marketing and therefore socio-demographic variables should be investigated (KIM et al. 2006, 957). Further for the use of green events as differentiation tool for the organising body, and the derived benefits should be subject to research (HENDERSON 2011, 255).

2.2.2. Instruments for sustainable events

Sustainable event management evolved over years resulting in numerous frameworks, such as principle guides and standards to make events environmental friendlier. Similar as in the traditional tourism industry, events are increasingly subject to ecolabelling (SMITH-CHRISTENSEN 2009, 26). There are principle guides from other industries that can be applied for events such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS), the Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the International Standard Organisation (ISO) ISO: 14001. They are intended to create a balance between maintaining profitability and reducing environmental impact (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 8). Other frameworks are:

- Sustainable Events Guide
- The Sustainable Exhibition Industry Project SEXI
- The Hannover Principles: Design for Sustainability – Expo 2000
- British Standard BS 8901:2007 Specification for a sustainable event management system
- Staging Major Sport Events: The Guide

- The Sustainable Music Festival – A Strategic Guide (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 4ff).

Following organisations and initiatives emerged especially dedicated to the meetings industry:

- The Green Meetings Industry Council (GMIC 2012c) is a non-profit membership based organisations aiming to transform the global meetings industry through sustainability. They offer trainings and workshops on how to develop a sustainability action plan for events and teach the requirements to comply with sustainability standards. Further, they collaborate with leaders of all levels to implement sustainable best practice for meetings, events, hospitality and exhibition management. They also distribute awards for outstanding performance.
- The Convention Industry Council was founded by four organisations to facilitate exchange of information within the meetings, conventions, and exhibitions industry. Together with Accepted Practices Exchange APEX they developed the industry's first sustainable meeting standard (CIC 2012a). The standards are composed of nine sectors addressing the scope of the meeting and event planning process: audio visual, accommodation, communications, destinations, exhibits, food and beverages, meeting venue, on-site office, and transportation (CIC 2012b).
- The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is an international non-governmental organisation and collaborated with the centre of the United Nations Environment Program, that developed the world's most widely used framework for voluntary sustainability reporting.
- Environment Canada's Green Meeting Guide
- Green Event Summit 2008: A platform to exchange knowledge and experience amongst green meeting stakeholders
- International Exhibition for Incentive Travel Frankfurt IMEX (ACB 2012b)

The following international standards are considered to be leading: the BS 8901 and ISO 20121 management systems, the APEX ASTM standards, and the GRI

guidelines. They are different in their approach and can be used in conjunction with each other to optimise the results (GMIC 2012b).

The international standards for green events have been established to serve as guidelines, and therefore have only limited potential encourage businesses to host a sustainable event. In order to foster green events it is suggested that they should be seen as a tool to gain a competitive advantage (HENDERSON 2011, 246). A competitive advantage can be achieved through complying with green event standards of an ecolabel. Through the accreditation with an ecolabel, event managers have the opportunity to differentiate their organisation from others. The extend of the differentiating effect depends on the quality of the ecolabel's standards (HENDERSON 2011, 152f).

Green meetings are subject to green washing as well. For example a convention centre proudly stated that it recycles but in fact recycling only took place under the sales' assistant desk (PLANYOURMEETINGS 2013). There are numerous examples of green washing within conference and business tourism, which fuel scepticism. To encourage true green meetings, credible instruments, such as ecolabelling, are considered to be inevitable to verify the environmental claims made.

2.2.3. Ecolabelling for green meetings in Austria

Within the field of green meetings there are two ecolabels that were created in Austria. Ökoprofit was created in 1991 by the Environmental Agency Graz and is a regional label dedicated to sustainability in the meetings industry in Graz, Styria (ÖKOPROFIT 2013). On a national level there is the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings and Events, which is an adapted version of the Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism, see figure 9. The 'Ecolabel Guideline 62 Green Meetings and Green Events' pursues to inform and raise awareness and covers four categories of events, such as congress/meetings, company meetings, trade fairs/exhibitions, seminars, and other events that fulfil the requirements set by the authority (BMLFUW, 2012 5ff).



Figure 9: The Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings (BMLFUW 2013)

The criteria of the governmental run ecolabel are available online and listed in table 5 together with the maximum number of points possible. They are divided into basic requirements, which the licensee has to fulfil in any case and in event specific criteria, of which some can be selected freely. A minimum number of points must be reached, which depend on the scope and size.

Table 5: Point system of the criteria (BMLFUW 2012, 8)

Area of event organisation	Maximum
1. Mobility and CO ₂ offsetting	18
2. Accommodation	16
3. Event venue	26.5
4. Procurement, material and waste management	15.5.
5. Exhibitors/Exhibition stand builders	2
6. Catering	16.5
7. Communication and social aspects	14.5
SUM, maximum	109

The facility hosting the event has to be a licensee for the Austrian Ecolabel to be able to award the ecolabel for green meetings. Up until now there are 28 licensees (GREEN MEETINGS 2013a) and 102 green meetings and six events have been awarded the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings and Events (GREEN MEETINGS 2013b), depicted in table 6. The facility, which applies for being a licensee is

accountable for the compliance with the criteria, the documentation and the licensing of the events (BMLFUW 2012, 7).

Table 6: List of licensees and their amount of ecolabelled meetings and events (GREEN MEETINGS 2013a)

Licensee	Ecolabelled meetings and events
Agentur mast	4
Austrian Convention Bureau	7
Austropa Interconvention	3
Brainbows informationsmanagement gmbh	4
Büro wien - inszenierte kommunikation marketing gmbh	3
Cateringsolutions GmbH	1
Congress Centrum Alpbach	7
Congress Saalfelden	2
Congress und Messe Innsbruck GmbH	8
Conventionland Kärnten	3
Design Center Linz	1
Division 4 Communication GmbH	1
Ecoversum - netzwerk für nachhaltiges wirtschaften	18
Event Company Opitz & Hasil	6
Fairanstaltung - Unternehmensberatung und Veranstaltungsorganisation	3
Festspielhaus Bregenz	4
Hannah's Plan	3
Hotel Modul	1
Kultur- und Seminarzentrum Schloss Goldegg	6
MK Marketing GmbH	1
Mondial Kongress und Events	1
Pi-five DialogFeld GmbH	1
RAM Consulting GmbH	6
Salzburg Congress	3
Steinschaler Naturhotels	3
Studio 44 der Österreichischen Lotterien Ges.m.b.H.	1
Vereint: Vereins- und Konferenzmanagement GmbH	1
Vienna Convention Bureau	6

2.3. Hypotheses

Events basically depend on three components. An organising body (e.g. a company or in this case the research facility) employing an event manager or organisation team, a place to host the event, and event goers as depicted in figure 10. Each circle represents a stakeholder – the event organisation team, the host community, and the audience all of them are essential for the event's existence (SMITH-CHRISTENSEN 2009, 23).



Figure 10: Sustainable events (SMITH-CHRISTENSEN 2009, 23)

The proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings is considered to be dependent on event organisation teams' perception of ecolabelling for green meetings as they are the ones, who chose to ecolabel their event. Further the congress facility is considered to be crucial in the ecolabelling process as they are the licensees who host and administer the ecolabelling process. Last but not least the green meeting attendees are of importance as they are the ones who attend and experience the ecolabelled green meeting. Acknowledging the importance of these three stakeholders, their perception of ecolabelling for green meetings and the ecolabelling process is investigated. The research is based on a specific congress facility and event, namely the Congress Centrum Alpbach and the scientific conference 'Forests for People 2012', which received the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

The first three hypotheses are dedicated to the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting and the ecolabel it self. The remaining hypotheses are dedicated to the perception of the ecolabelling process, the roles of the organisation team and the

Congress facility in the ecolabelling process, and the perception of incentivised environmentally friendly travel.

In order that ecolabels can influence consumption behaviour they have to reach their target group. Thus the proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings is considered to be dependent on event stakeholders knowing about the possibility of ecolabelling events with the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings. Based on the literature review revealing a low awareness concerning ecolabels in tourism and acknowledging the recent establishment of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings, following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 1: The level of awareness concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is low.

Hosting a green meeting is considered to be attractive if it leads to reduced costs and enhances the image of the organising body, and is positively perceived by the attendees. Further, the instrument of ecolabelling for tourism facilities is often considered to result in marketing benefits. To investigate, if and in which ways the ecolabelling of green meetings is beneficial, following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 2: The ecolabelled conference including its green elements is positively perceived by the attendees and contributes to the image of the organisation team's research facility.

Literature reveals that socio-demographic variables are thought to have an influence on the perception of green events, and present useful information for their marketing. It is suggested that these variables should be investigated on their influence on the perception of the ecolabelled green meeting. Therefore following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 3: Attendees' country of origin influences the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting.

Implementing environmental friendly measures or joining an ecolabelling scheme is often considered to be linked to organisations difficulties. The required resource intensity in terms of money, time and environmental expertise plays a central role in the decision for or against the ecolabelling of tourism facilities. To find out how the ecolabelling process for green meetings is perceived, following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 4: The ecolabelling process of the conference is perceived to require a significant amount of time, money and environmental expertise.

The study will look at the relationship between the licenced congress facility and the organisation team. In order to develop recommendations it is important to know who set the impulse for the ecolabelling of the conference – the organisation team or the congress facility. Value driven motives such as environmental responsibility are found to be elementary for the implementation of environmental friendly measures amongst tourism facility managers. As such it is suggested that a congress facility offering ecolabelling is already committed to sustainability and therefore plays a crucial role encouraging ecolabelled green meetings. To test this, following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 5: The congress facility sets the impulse for the ecolabelling of green meetings.

Incentivising environmental friendly travel, i.e. the use of public transport and the option of carbon offsetting, is an important green meeting element, which lies in the hand of the conference attendees. Therefore it is important to investigate which options of travel are used, and how environmentally friendly travel alternatives are perceived by the conference attendees, in order to further encourage their use. As travel is considered to be one of the main contributors to the negative impacts of conference tourism and energy intense travel options are mostly used in tourism, following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 6: Efforts to incentivise environmental friendly travel alternatives are of limited effect.

3. Method

3.1. Selection of case study

The Congress Centre Alpbach is located in 6236 Alpbach 246 in Tyrol, Austria, see figure 11. Used for mining in the 15th century it has a long history of settlement. Now the mining activities were replaced by tourism and Alpbach attracts around 22,000 visitors both winter and summer. Since 1945 Alpbach has been the host for the Alpbach European Forum with leading people from science, business, arts and politics and therefore has a long tradition for congresses. Now at this special event there are more than 3,000 people from more than 50 countries attending annually.



Figure 11: Location of the Congress Centrum Alpbach (CCA 2013a, 51)

The closest international airports are Innsbruck with 57km, Munich with 160km, and Salzburg with 150km. The closest train stations are Wörgl with 25km and Jenbach with 20km. By car it is accessible via the highway A12 exit Kramsach/Brixlegg (CCA 2013a, 51).

The Congress Centrum Alpbach has a plenary hall for 500 people, five seminar rooms from 20 to 200 people, two foyers for exhibitions and as catering area, and a terrace making up a total of 1,585 square metres of meeting space. Numerous efforts were made to brand themselves as sustainable meeting destination and a brochure was issued called the 'The Alpbach Way: 360° Green' to communicate their environmental measures. The congress facility is Green Globe certified and a licensee of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings (CCA 2013b).

One of the events hosted at the Congress Centrum Alpbach is the '1st international Conference on Forests for People – International experiences and the vital role of forests for the future'. This scientific conference was created by the International Union of Forest Research Organisation (IUFRO) in cooperation with the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna. The organising body was constituted from BOKU's Institute of Landscape Development, Recreation and Conservation Planning.

IUFRO is the only world wide international organisation dedicated to forest research and related sciences. Their goal is to promote global cooperation in forest related research as well as to disseminate scientific knowledge and to contribute to policy making and forest management.

BOKU was founded in 1872 as an agricultural research institution and nowadays is an education and research centre for renewable resources and its goal is to contribute to the protection of resources for future generations. The connection between natural sciences, engineering, and economics is intended to provide knowledge about an ecological and economically sustainable use of natural resources.

3.2. Selection of research design

Ajar to Smith-Christensen model of sustainable events a research design was developed encompassing the conference attendees, the congress facility and the organisation team. A combination of qualitative and quantitative interviews with the different stakeholders is applied, visible in figure 12.

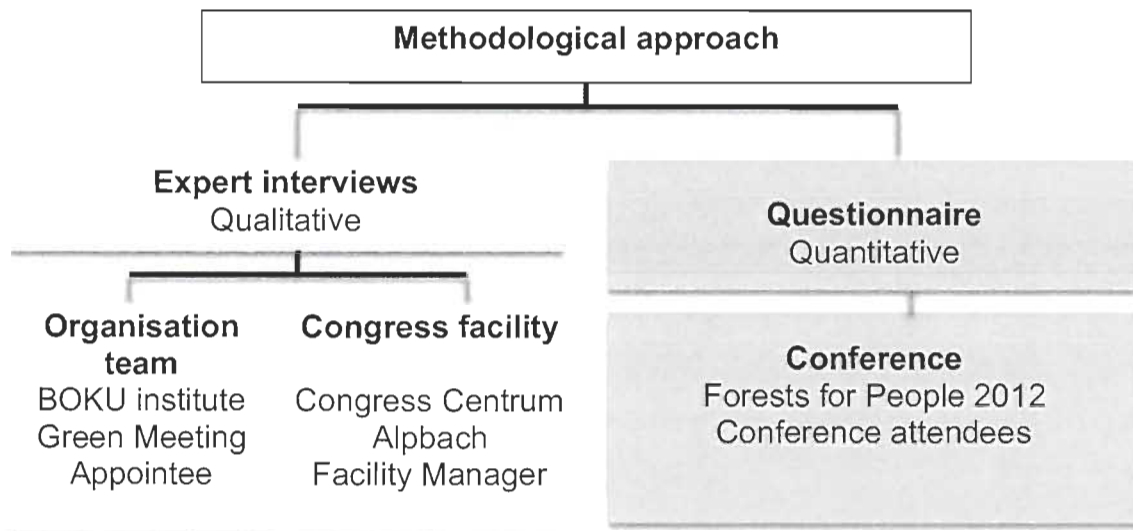


Figure 12: Research design

Interviews are distinguished by their level of standardisation. Standardised interviews are used in quantitative research in form of questionnaires with closed questions. Non-standardised interviews are used in qualitative research leaving plenty of room for answers and to obtain more detailed data. Semi-standardised interviews are rarely applied (GLÄSER and LAUDEL 2009, 40; BORTZ and DÖRING 2006, 296).

Quantitative research is under a nomothetic-deductive paradigm, testing existing theories, whereas qualitative research acts inductively and generates theories (GLÄSER und LAUDEL 2009, 24). For the attendees an already existing standardised questionnaire, developed for the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings and Events, was available. This template was used to investigate attendees' perception on the ecolabelled conference quantitatively. For organisers and hosts, no such interview template was available. As qualitative research works inductively, by examining an individual case to develop a theory, qualitative interviews were used.

3.2.1. Qualitative research design

There are many different forms of qualitative interviews, which are classified based on the interviewee (expert interview, group interview), on the topic (dilemma interview, biography interview), or the technique of questioning (narrative, associative) (BORTZ and DÖRING 2006, 296ff). To investigate the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting as well as the ecolabelling process, expert interviews were considered to be appropriate.

An expert interview is characterised through interviewees' role as specialists for specific constellations. The aim of an expert interview is to collect interviewees' points of view, attitude, interpretation and perception of a certain topic. An expert can be everybody whose specific knowledge is relevant for the study. This specific knowledge of the expert is still unknown to the interviewer, therefore non-standardised, qualitative interviews are the only suitable way of revealing that knowledge. A guided interview is considered the most appropriate form of non-standardised interviews used for experts. They are based on a predetermined topic, have a given set of questions that have to be asked but the order and phrasing of the questions are not binding. Additional questions are possible and thereby ensure that all aspects can be covered (GLÄSER and LAUDEL 2009, 41ff).

In the centre of this research is the organisation team's and the facility manager's perception of green meetings and their ecolabelling process. A qualitative interview design, employing guideline interviews, that leaves more room for answers and reveals more detailed information, while covering all aspects, is found to be appropriate. The selected interviewees in table 7 represent experts in the ecolabelling process who are considered to embody specific knowledge.

Table 7: Interview partners

Stakeholder	Interviewee	form
Organisation team: Green meeting appointee	Verena Melzer, Bakk. tech.	in person
Congress facility: Facility manager	Georg Hechenblaikner, MBA	telephone

For the selection of interview form GLÄSER and LAUDEL (2009, 153) recommend face-to-face interviews over telephone and e-mail, because of their smaller controllability and lack of visual cues, which result in a reduction of quality. Owing to time and financial restrictions one interviewee, who is situated in Tyrol, one interview was conducted via telephone. Even though there is legitimate critique on telephone interviews, scholars argue that there is only little evidence that telephone interviews produce lower quality data than face-to-face interviews. Telephone interviews are considered to allow respondents to relax and give away sensitive information even more freely (Novick 2008, 397). Two guideline interviews were developed (see appendix), each specified to the specific role the expert has in the ecolabelling process.

For the interpretation of data the interviews were analysed using the methodology of extraction. Extraction describes the process of systemising the information contained by their relevance to the research question. The search strategy is based on theoretical considerations about the research variables and the hypotheses. Thereby the information obtained in the interviews is structured and reduced (GLÄSER and LAUDEL 2009, 200f).

3.2.2. Quantitative research design

The questionnaire for the conference attendees covers following themes:

- The awareness of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings and the ecolabelling of the conference (Questions 1, 2): These questions should investigate whether the attendees know that the conference is ecolabelled as a green meeting and whether they know about the ecolabel at all.
- The perception and evaluation of the green elements linked to the ecolabelling of the conference (Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12): These questions should reveal which of the various efforts concerning the conference in general, the catering, as well as environmental friendly accessibility of accommodation and side events are noticed, and how the conference attendees evaluate them.
- The travel to the conference (Questions 8, 9): These questions should assess conference attendees' travel choice to the conference, as well as their

evaluation of incentivised environmentally friendly travel such as public transport and the possibility of carbon-offsetting the journey.

- Further, attendees' 'country of origin' is collected to identify if there are any relationships with this socio-demographic variable and the themes mentioned above (Question 7).

The answers of the obtained questionnaires were coded as data of ordinal and nominal scale, according to the level of measurement see table 8. The questionnaire consists of thirteen questions from which one is an open question (7) and others (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 13) leave room for explanations and comments. In the questionnaire template the term 'Austrian Green Meetings Certificate' is used instead of 'Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings', as somebody else designed the questionnaire template.

Table 8: Level of measurement

1. Did you know before your arrival in Alpbach that the event carries the 'Austrian Green Meetings Certificate'?
Yes = 1
No = 0
If yes, how did you hear about it?
Separately collected
2. Have you heard about the 'Austrian Green Meetings Certificate' before?
Yes = 1
No = 0
If yes, how did you hear about it?
Separately collected
3. Have you noticed efforts to protect the environment and to save resources in this event, and have you noticed some success?
Yes = 1
No = 0
Waste separation = j/n
Paper saving = j/n
Use of recycled paper = j/n
Energy-efficient lightning = j/n

Energy efficient utilities management = j/n
Environmentally-friendly decoration material = j/n
Accommodation with environment certificate(s) = j/n
Others = separately collected
4. Have you noticed efforts to protect the environment and to save resources associated with the catering of this event, and have you noticed some success?
Yes = 1
No = 0
Reusable dishes and glasses = j/n
Organic products = j/n
No exotic produce = j/n
Regional products = j/n
Fair trade products = j/n
Others = separately collected
5. Do you perceive these measures referred to in question 3 and 4 as positive?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0
6. In your opinion did these measures contribute positively to the quality of the event?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0
7. Where are you from?
Europe = 1
Asia = 2
America, Africa, Oceania = 3
Austria = 4
8. How did you travel to the event?
With my own car = j/n
By bicycle = j/n

By train or bus = j/n
As a passenger in a car = j/n
By airplane = j/n
Others = separately collected
If you used public transport to get to Alpbach, how satisfied were you with how the event organisers promoted this option on the whole?
Very satisfied = 2
Satisfied = 1
Indifferent = 0
Dissatisfied = -1
Very dissatisfied = -2
Reasons:
Separately collected
9. Were you informed about the possibility of carbon-offsetting before your trip, or did the organisers take care of the carbon-offsetting for your journey?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0
10. Was your accommodation accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0
11. Were the side events accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0
12. During the course of the event have you learned more about environmental initiatives, social activities or cultural events in this region?
Yes = 1
No = -1
Don't know = 0

13. Would you like to add any further comments?

Separately collected

The coded answers were filled unsorted into Excel data matrix see figure 13. All 79 received questionnaires could be used for the analysis.

Auf dem Blatt suchen																	
Start		Layout		Tabellen		Diagramme		SmartArt		Formeln		Daten		Überprüfen			
Bearbeiten		Schriftart		Ausrichtung		Zahl		Format		Zellen		Designs					
Einfügen		Calibri (Textkör.) 11		Zeilenumbruch		Standard		Bedingte Formatierung		Formatvorlagen		Aktionen		Designs		Ab	
S1		own car															
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O		
2	know before	know ceramic waste		paper saving	recycled paper	plastic bottles	lightning	management	decoration	accommodate	dishes	organic	exotic not	region	fair trade	ps	
3		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
4		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
5		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
6		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
7		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
8		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
9		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
10		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
11		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
12		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
13		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
14		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
15		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
16		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
17		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
18		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
19		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
20		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
21		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
22		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
23		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
24		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
25		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
26		-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
27		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		

Figure 13: Extract from data matrix

The filled in questionnaires are analysed in three steps. As a first step descriptive statistics using absolute and relative frequencies are employed, as a second step the statistical hypotheses for H_4 are tested with the chi-square test, and as a third step the comments on the questionnaires are collected and interpreted in context of the hypotheses.

As no other socio-demographic variables were asked in the template questionnaire, 'country of origin' was the only variable that could be used to research the profile of green event goers, as suggested in literature.

Hypothesis H_3 is tested with subordinated statistical hypotheses. In order to draw generalisations of the population, statistical hypotheses are generated to identify if there are any relationships with variables. Testing statistical hypotheses is accompanied by a pair of hypotheses: the null hypothesis H_0 and the alternative hypothesis H_1 (BORTZ and DÖRING, 2006, 24f). The null hypotheses for this statistical analysis is that the classifications are independent, meaning that there are no

relationships between e.g. the classifications 'country of origin' and 'noticed catering efforts'. The alternative hypothesis is that the classifications are dependent, meaning that there is a relationship or dependency between e.g. the classification 'country of origin' and 'noticed catering efforts'. Thus the statistical hypotheses are as follows:

H_0 : There are no significant relationships between the variable 'country of origin' and the level of awareness that the conference carries the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

H_0 : There are no significant relationships between the variable 'country of origin' and the level of awareness concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and noticed general efforts related to the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and noticed catering efforts related to the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the travel to the conference.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the level of awareness of carbon-offsetting one's journey.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the perception of the accommodation as accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the perception of side-events as accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the learning effect about environmental initiatives, social activities or cultural events in this region.

To generate a statement concerning the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis H_0 , the data was analysed with the statistical analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), to conduct tests of significance. Significant relationships between two classifications (e.g. 'noticed catering efforts' and 'country of origin') were tested with cross tabs. Additionally chi-square-tests were conducted to test the significance, revealing whether the results incidentally occur in the sample

or can be found in the population as well. The results of the chi-square tests allow a statement that can be applied on the general population. When the probability of error is lower than 5% ($\alpha < 0.05$) the alternative hypothesis is accepted. However it is noted that the probability of error is a probability for the data and not for the hypothesis. For this research a level of $\alpha = 0.05$ is chosen, as it is the usual significance niveau for hypothesis testing (BORTZ 1999, 114; BORTZ and DÖRING 2006, 26).

Even though the chi-square is a nonparametric test it is not required that the data is normally distributed, but relies on a '...weak assumption that the variables values are normally distributed in the population from which the sample is drawn' (CONNOR-LINTON 2010, 146). The requirements for the chi-square test are (CONNOR-LINTON, 146f) are:

- Chi-square is most appropriate for analysing relationships among nominal and ordinal variable
- Data must be reported in raw frequencies
- Measured variables must be independent of each other
- The sample must be randomly drawn from the population (random sampling is not required but sample must not be biased)
- Values and categories must be independent
- Values and categories on independent and dependent variables must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive
- The expected and the observed frequencies cannot be too small: for larger tables (2x4 or larger) all expected frequencies but one are at least 5 and the one small cell at least 1.

In this research the data is not normally distributed, which is considered to reflect the usual pattern of international conference attendees: an international scientific conference in Europe will of course have more attendees from Europe than from other continents. In order distinguish between attendees of 27 countries they were divided into four groups (Europe, Asia, America Africa Oceania, Austria). Austrian attendees are coded as a separate group as the conference took place in Austria and the ecolabel is Austrian.

4. Results

4.1. Expert interviews

The respondents were asked for their perception of the ecolabelled conference and the ecolabelling process. First the green meeting appointee was interviewed and second the facility manager was interviewed, in order to gain an insight into the organisation team's and congress facility's perception of ecolabelling, respectively.

The green meeting appointee was interviewed in person on the 21st of November 2012, and the facility manager was interviewed on the 27th of November 2012 via telephone. Both interviews took 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed immediately after they were conducted, to avoid a loss of information.

The results are structured around the key research themes: the perception of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings, the perception of the green elements of an ecolabelled green meeting and its associated benefits, the role of the congress facility and the organisation team in the ecolabelling process, and last but not least, their perception of the ecolabelling process. The German transcripts can be found in the appendix.

4.1.1. Interview with the green meeting appointee

The green meeting appointee Verena Melzer bakk. techn. of the organisation team was interviewed on her perception of green meetings and the ecolabelling process of the conference. The results are structured around the key research themes that could be identified in the interview.

4.1.1.1. Perception of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings

The Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism was known amongst the organisation team, but its application for green meetings and thus the ecolabelling of conferences was new to them. Despite a trend for sustainable conferences and international green meeting initiatives was identified, the availability of a national label was considered a novelty. According to the green meeting appointee there is a specific clientele for the ecolabelling of green meetings, and thus rather represents a niche market than a

product for the masses. For example, this niche could be supplied by scientific communities researching on sustainability, for whom the ecolabelling of their conferences is considered an important issue.

The Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is positively perceived by the organisation team, however the awareness concerning its existence could be higher amongst potential target groups. Even though a demand for ecolabelling is assumed it is considered to be only limited, as for the majority of event and conference managers, sustainability does not play a role. The green meeting appointee found it questionable, that even though there are congress facilities interested in green events, their awareness of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is rather low. Furthermore the organisation team was disappointed that only a small amount of attendees knew that they were participating in an ecolabelled conference, even though it was communicated via e-mail and the conference homepage. This suggests that awareness concerning the ecolabelling of green meetings and the ecolabel itself is low amongst event organisers, attendees, and congress facilities.

4.1.1.2. Perception of the green elements

Overall the green elements were positively evaluated by the organisation team and considered to contribute to the quality and sustainability of the conference. The effect of green elements was considered to be significant concerning the reduction of trash, promotional gifts, and paper. In these areas ecolabelled green meetings are perceived to contribute considerably to save resources. Further the efficient use of energy through the special design of the building was acknowledged. The efforts concerning the catering, i.e. seasonal, local supply and fair trade were noticed and perceived to contribute to the whole atmosphere of the conference.

The field trips were conducted via shuttle bus and the distance from accommodation to congress facility was in walking distance, contributing to a reduction of emissions. However, concerning the travel to congress facility, the green meeting appointee identified limits of environmental benefits. The organisation team is aware of the fact that the majority of attendees have to travel via plane to an international conference. That the congress facility is located remotely in the Alps, and therefore public transport is not the most attractive travel option, further complicates travel. The

question rose if travel emissions can be avoided at all, as personal exchange and networking is an integral part of research communities. Even though efforts encouraging environmentally friendly travel have been made so that attendees think about their travel options, the organisation team accepts that international conferences will always depend on people travelling via plane. Therefore these efforts are considered to have only limited effect. However, according to the organisation team there is potential for the improvement of environmentally friendly travel to the Congress Centrum Alpbach.

4.1.1.3. The role of the organisation team in the ecolabelling process

For the organisation team it was important to support the image of their research facility, therefore the conference was already planned to be as green as possible. The university is dedicated to sustainability, which is visible through study programmes, publications and research. Therefore it was important for them to host a conference that is sound with its profile. Apart from the research facility's profile also the personal commitment of the employees played a significant role for 'going green'. According to the green meeting appointee, members of the organisation team are considered to practice what they preach: they are dedicated to sustainability in their research and involved in environmentally friendly activities at home, and therefore fond of a sustainable conference. An intention was also to create a consciousness for sustainability so that every single conference attendee is aware of her or his contribution. Thus, the idea for hosting a sustainable conference came from the aim to support the image of the research facility and the feeling of personal responsibility of the organisation team. This suggests that supporting a green image and a feeling of personal responsibility is a strong motivator for hosting a green meeting.

The congress facility was not chosen because of the possibility to ecolabel the conference. According to the green meeting appointee it would have been hosted at the Congress Centrum Alpbach as well, if ecolabelling had not been possible. The congress facility was chosen as destination because it was considered to present the topic of the conference in the most appropriate way. To preserve the authenticity of the conference and enable appropriate field trips, a rural area was chosen, as it is sound with the research field of the conference. Apart from the desired rural

characteristics of the location, the Congress Centrum Alpbach was chosen due to its good reputation as international congress facility. Thus, for the conference the possibility of ecolabelling was not a decisive factor for the destination choice, but rather aspects of image support, authenticity and appropriate representation of theme, and a high quality congress facility were factored in the decision.

4.1.1.3. Organisation team's perception of the ecolabelling process

Despite the organisation team's intentions to hold a green conference, the actual impulse to ecolabel the conference came from the congress facility itself. During the planning of the conference they were informed about the possibility of ecolabelling by the congress facility. The Congress Centrum Alpbach is considered to play a crucial role in the ecolabelling process. They supplied a contact person, who was experienced with the matter of green meetings and assisted during the ecolabelling process, which the organisation team considered to be very helpful. Apart from the personnel assistance, it was a big advantage that the congress facility already fulfilled many criteria that are required for the ecolabel. Through the supply of an experienced contact person and already fulfilled criteria, the facility was perceived to have an essential role in the feasibility of the ecolabelling process. Concerning the ecolabel itself, the flexibility of the criteria, i.e. only a certain number of criteria has to be fulfilled and some could be selected freely, were considered to ease the ecolabelling process.

For this conference no major obstacles or difficulties were identified. However, the green meeting appointee is aware that they could occur in other cases. An issue of concern that was mentioned are costs, as events like conferences are on a tight budget and additional expenses caused by ecolabelling can present an obstacle. For the conference, the costs were considered to be moderate in comparison to the overall costs, and some of the criteria also allowed to reduce cost (e.g. through paper saving). Another issue of concern that can lead to difficulties are organisational efforts. For the conference the organisation of a shuttle bus from Munich to Alpbach was considered as an organisational challenge but assistance by the facility was received. Overall, the ecolabelling process was perceived as easy due to the flexibility of the criteria and the facility already fulfilling some of them, the facility's

assistance through an experienced contact person, and the only small increase of costs.

4.1.2. Interview with the facility manager

The facility manager, Georg Hechenblaikner MBA, was interviewed giving an insight on the facility management's perception of green meetings and the ecolabelling process. The results are structured around the key research themes that could be identified in this interview.

4.1.2.1. Benefits of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings

With the new construction of the building the Congress Centrum Alpbach began to integrate environmental measures in their facility management. A few years later, around 2005, they became aware that there is a demand for sustainable events within conference and business tourism. Acknowledging the emerging market for sustainable conference and business tourism, the offers were transformed in this direction. Soon a verification of environmental claims was necessary, as customers increasingly asked for it. Here the Austrian Ecolabel was chosen because it does not only ecolabel the facility, but the events itself and because it is a well-known ecolabel. According to the facility manager, they aim to improve the Congress Centrum Alpbach constantly and not only fulfil the minimum criteria required. Therefore the ecolabel is considered to be beneficial as it facilitates an external verification of their business, and gives input for further improvements.

According to the facility manager, ecolabelling also has an educative benefit and raises awareness. More than 50% of all attendees were at an ecolabelled green meeting in total making up 7,000 people. If they are confronted with sustainability during their stay, they can carry on this idea and change things in their scope of action too.

The Austrian Ecolabel is considered to be relevant for Austrian event managers and attendees because in Austria it has the status of a brand. The Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is considered to be beneficial for the image of event managers' companies or organisations, because it can be used for marketing purposes, public

relations, and corporate social responsibility reporting. Further, it allows them to distinguish themselves from others and to position them on the green market, which can create a competitive advantage. The usually positive feedback of attendees creates a feeling of doing 'something good', being another reason for implementing environmental measures in form of ecolabelling. According to the facility manager, event managers decide to ecolabel their event as a result of personal commitment for sustainability within the event industry, and that it can be used for public relations, internal marketing, and market positioning.

4.1.2.3. Perception of the green elements

In general attendees' feedback on an ecolabelled green meeting is very good. The green elements are differently perceived and therefore have to be differently communicated. For example the attendees are actively informed concerning the heating costs and the energy supply of the congress facility through a tour provided by the facility. Eco-electricity and the use of pellet heating is a crucial element to reduce emissions and using this energy supply has to be communicated, as attendees will not notice on their own.

In contrast to this, green elements concerning the catering are noticed immediately. The food is labelled so that attendees notice the difference in comparison to conventional catering. Important criteria are the organic production, local supply and seasonality of food. This is not possible for certain products such as coffee, orange juice, and bananas, therefore fair trade products are used. Here, according to the facility manager attendees are found to be very sensitive, therefore the caterer has to be very careful when selecting the products. Sometimes bananas are too much for some attendees, even though they are fair trade.

Apart from green elements concerning the energy supply and catering, efforts concerning environmental friendly travel are also noticed by the majority of attendees. The efforts encompass information about the accessibility of the congress facility via public transport and the possibility of carbon offsetting. Even though attempts are made to reduce transportation and CO₂ emissions, travel to the Congress Centrum Alpbach remains an issue of concern. In this area the effectivity of environmental measures is considered to be limited because international attendees

have to take the plane to get to the conference. The facility manager is aware that international attendees will always remain a part of this business, and they cannot be excluded or asked to travel by ship. Therefore the facility management only tries to optimise environmental measures where it is feasible and economical viable to do so. Here, an acceptance of a tension between business reality and environmental responsibility becomes visible.

4.1.2.3. The role of the congress facility in the ecolabelling process

According to the facility manager, the Congress Centrum Alpbach is usually chosen because of its total supply, Alpbach's reputation as an international congress destination, the unique selling proposition of the mountain village, the availability of accommodation, and good accessibility. The integration of sustainability criteria in their offers and the possibility of ecolabelling are considered to be the cherry on top. The impulse to ecolabel events is considered to be largely the result of the congress facility's efforts.

The congress facility is considered to have a leading role in the decision for or against ecolabelling, as event managers are being informed about the possibility of ecolabelling and the required effort that has to be invested. The Congress Centrum Alpbach provides precise information on the expected workload and the benefits that can be derived from ecolabelling. Through the supply of a green meeting manager as a contact person, sufficient assistance in the ecolabelling process is provided. Further the Congress Centrum Alpbach already fulfils many green meeting criteria innately, which reduces the workload. Thereby the congress facility is considered to alleviate customers' fears, as they often think the ecolabelling of their event is linked to severe resource intensity and organisational efforts.

Through the Congress Centrum Alpbach's active role by providing information on the actual workload and benefits, as well as supplying expertise, they make ecolabelling palatable for event managers and win them over to ecolabel their event. Thus the facility is considered to have a significant influence on the proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings.

4.1.2.4. Facility manager's perception of the ecolabelling process

Event managers are often afraid of the expected workload linked to the ecolabelling of their event, namely over boarding bureaucracy and costs. According to the facility manager, fears concerning an over boarding bureaucracy and costs are arbitrary. The Congress Centrum Alpbach already fulfils many criteria, and therefore for this congress facility the ecolabelling of green meetings is considered to be 'handed on a silver platter'. Of course there are some criteria, which require some organisational effort that the organisation team has to be willing to invest e.g. the catering, promotional gifts, and the travel to Alpbach. For example the shuttle bus from Munich to Alpbach for the conference attendees is linked to some work but not considered to be impossible. Further, higher costs are often considered as an obstacle for ecolabelling, but in fact this is not the case because in comparison to the overall costs of a conference. The additional expenses are considered to be only minimal and also positively contributing to the quality of the event. For example, the catering according to the criteria is more expensive, but is composed by high quality products and therefore the benefit derived is considered to be higher than the actual costs.

The flexibility of criteria and the administration of the ecolabelling process by the congress facility are considered as big advantages. According to the facility manager, there are no significant obstacles that have to be faced during the ecolabelling process. Therefore the decision for or against ecolabelling is not considered to be a question of available resources and being able to, but rather a question of willingness. The difficulties in the ecolabelling process are considered to lie within personal boundaries, as the ecolabel was designed to be attractive for event managers and not to scare them off.

4.2. Quantitative questionnaire

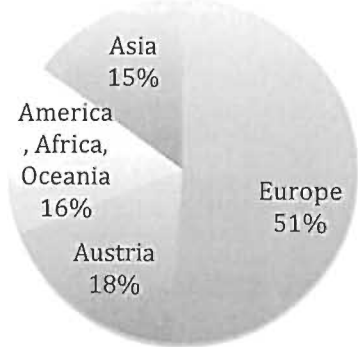
The questionnaires were handed out on the 24th of May 2012, at the final session of the conference. Attendee's received a key ring as a present for filling in the questionnaire. In total 79 questionnaires (n = 79) were received, constituting a 50% return rate.

The results are structured around the key research themes addressed in the questionnaire: awareness of the ecolabelling of the conference and the label itself, perception of green elements, travel choice to the congress facility, and if there are any relationships with attendees' country of origin. The results are presented in absolute and relative frequencies, and a chi-square test is employed where necessary.

4.2.1. Socio-demographics

From the 79 questioned attendees, 40 were from Europe representing the majority of international conference attendees with 51%, visible in table 9. The second largest group came from Austria (18%). International attendees from other continents together made up nearly one third, coming from America, Africa or Oceania (16%), and Asia (15%). As it is an international conference, held in Austria it seems conclusive that it attracts a higher share of attendees, who are from Europe.

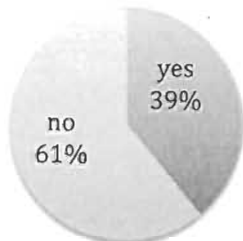
Table 9: Attendees' country of origin


Attendees' country of origin			
	absolute	relative	
Europe	40	51	
Asia	12	15	
America, Africa, Oceania	13	16	
Austria	14	18	

4.2.2. Awareness for the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings

The level of awareness concerning the conference's ecolabelling with the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings and the ecolabel in general is illustrated in table 9. It shows that 39% of the attendees knew before their arrival in Alpbach that the conference was ecolabelled with the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings. In accordance even less attendees, 10%, have heard about the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings in general.

Table 10: Attendees' level of awareness

Awareness that conference carries the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings			
	absolute	relative	
Yes	31	39	
No	48	61	

Awareness about the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings			
	absolute	relative	
Yes	8	10	
No	71	90	

The comments on the questionnaire reveal that the majority of the attendees knew about the ecolabelling of the conference through information on the conference website or in the programme folder. Concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings, the comments indicate that attendees knew about it from colleagues, the internet, research, and other conferences in Austria.

4.2.3. Perception and evaluation of green elements

All together, the green elements of the conference have been noticed by the majority of attendees and evaluated as positive. Nearly all of the attendees noticed the efforts to protect the environment and to save scarce resources concerning the conference

in general (95%) and concerning the catering (97%). However, not all of these efforts are noticed in the same intensity as visible in table 11. Efforts concerning the catering received higher rates of notice than the general efforts.

Table 11: Noticed green elements

Noticed general efforts			<p>Noticed general efforts (%)</p>
	absolute	relative	
Waste	46	58	
Paper saving	38	48	
Recycled paper	30	38	
Plastic badges	63	80	
Lightning	29	37	
Management	26	33	
Decoration	31	39	
Accommodation	18	23	
Noticed catering efforts			<p>Noticed catering efforts (%)</p>
	absolute	relative	
Dishes	46	77	
Organic	38	57	
No exotic	30	25	
Regional	63	75	
Fair trade	29	77	

Efforts concerning the dishes (77%), fair trade (77%), and regional products (75%) were noticed the most. Surprisingly 'no exotic produce' scored the lowest with 25%. Concerning the general efforts, the possibility to return plastic badges (80%), waste separation (58%) and paper saving (48%) were the efforts most noticed, whereas accommodation (23%) was the lowest.

The comments on the questionnaire revealed that avoidance of plastic bags was positively noticed, however waste separation e.g. for organic waste was found to be

insufficient. Concerning the catering one issue that stood out of the crowd was the availability of bananas, which obviously does not fit in with the claimed effort 'no exotic produce' and explains its low score.

The accessibility of the accommodation (99%) and side events (67%) was found to be environmentally friendly, and 65% of the attendees found that they have learned more about environmental initiatives, social activities or cultural events in this region.

In total the efforts were found to be overwhelmingly positive (99%) and contributing to the quality of the conference (87%) as depicted in table 12. However, still 10% remain sceptical towards these efforts, and do not think that they contribute to the quality of the event.

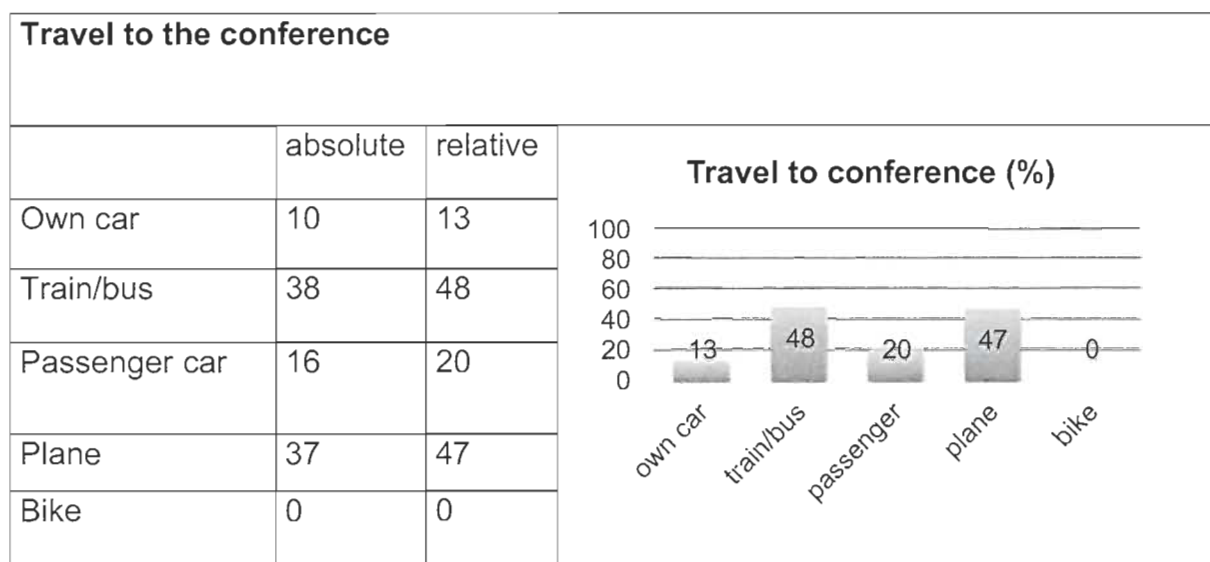
Table 12: Perception of green elements

Green elements contribution to the quality of the conference			
	absolute	relative	
Yes	69	87	
No	2	3	
Don't know	8	10	

4.2.4. Travel choice and evaluation of environmentally friendly alternatives

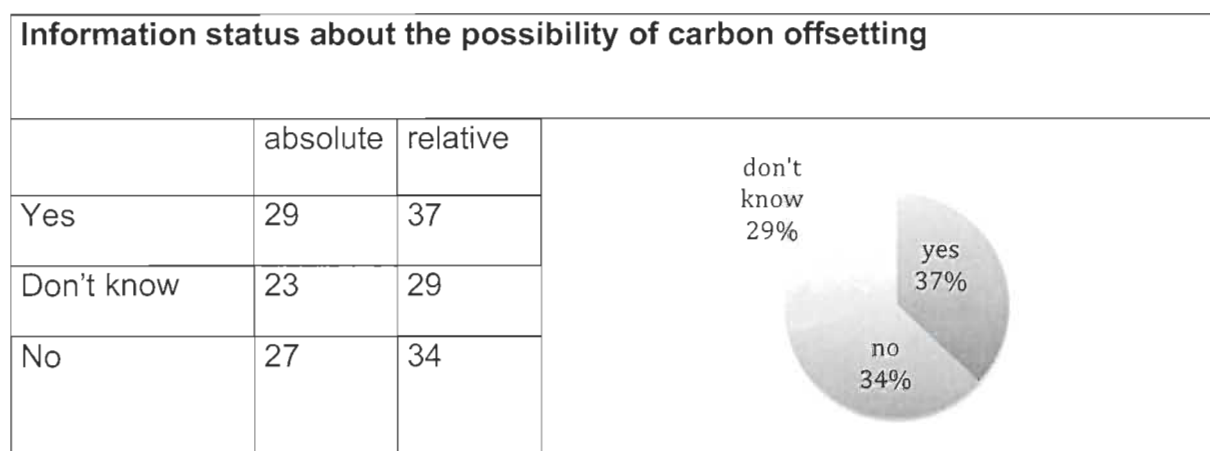
Attendees mainly travelled to conference via train or bus (48%) and plane (47%). In total on third used the car to get to the conference, travelling either with their own car (13%) or as a passenger in a car (20%) and nobody travelled by bike, as illustrated in table 13. Still energy intense travel to the conference is dominating. The high use of public transport (train/bus 48%) can be explained by attendees who used both plane and public transport to get to the conference, as visible in the questionnaires through double entries. They had to travel via plane to Munich, and then use public transport or the shuttle bus to the Congress Centrum Alpbach.

Table 13: Attendees' travel to the conference



The majority of attendees who travelled with public transport were either very satisfied (41%) or satisfied (41%) with the organisation of the service. However, comments on the questionnaires reveal that there have been some difficulties understanding the schedule and travel options to the conference. Attendees were informed by the organisation team about the option of carbon offsetting their travel. However, as depicted in table 14 an ambiguous information status was observed, and the results do not reveal whether attendees were offsetting their travel emissions or not.

Table 14: Attendees' information status on carbon offsetting



Comments concerning the location addressed the remoteness of the congress facility and the ecolabelling of the conference as a green meeting. Attendees expressed

their doubt about the 'greenness' of the conference simply because the congress facility is located remotely in the Alps and therefore a significant distance needs to be travelled from an international airport to Alpbach.

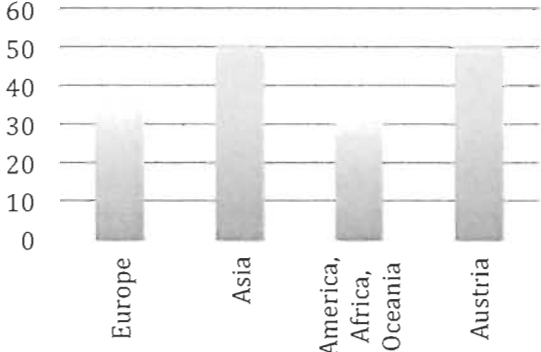
4.2.5. Relationships with 'country of origin'

As 'country of origin' was the only independent variable that could be used to identify statistical significant relationships, it was used to characterise the conference attendees. The results are described and depicted in absolute and relative frequencies in the following chapters.

4.2.5.1. Awareness of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings

The level of awareness that the conference carries the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is high for Asian and Austrian attendees, depicted in table 15. However, according to the chi-square test there is no significant relationship, therefore the null hypothesis H_0 : *There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the awareness that conference carries Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings*, is accepted with $\alpha = 0.582$.

Table 15: Level of awareness by country of origin

Level of awareness that conference carries ecolabel by country of origin													
	absolute	relative	<div>Level of awarness(%)</div>  <table><caption>Data for Level of awareness (%)</caption><thead><tr><th>Country of Origin</th><th>Awareness (%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Europe</td><td>35</td></tr><tr><td>Asia</td><td>50</td></tr><tr><td>America, Africa, Oceania</td><td>31</td></tr><tr><td>Austria</td><td>50</td></tr></tbody></table>	Country of Origin	Awareness (%)	Europe	35	Asia	50	America, Africa, Oceania	31	Austria	50
Country of Origin	Awareness (%)												
Europe	35												
Asia	50												
America, Africa, Oceania	31												
Austria	50												
Europe	14	35											
Asia	6	50											
America, Africa, Oceania	4	31											
Austria	7	50											

As depicted in table 16, only 36% of the Austrian attendees knew the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings, representing the majority. It appears conclusive that

more Austrian attendees knew the ecolabel, as it is a broadly known national label for environmental friendly goods and services. Therefore the country of origin is assumed to have an influence on the level of awareness. According to the chi-square test the null hypothesis H_0 : *There are no significant relationships between the variable 'country of origin' and the level of awareness concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings*, is rejected with $\alpha = 0.005$. However the requirements for the chi-square test are not fulfilled (see table 20, p. 82). Therefore the chi-square test has only limited value and the alternative hypothesis cannot be accepted. Thus no relationship between attendees' 'country of origin' and the level of awareness of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is identified.

Table 16: Level of awareness about the ecolabel by country of origin

Level of awareness about the ecolabel by country of origin			
	absolute	relative	<p>Level of awareness (%)</p>
Europe	2	5	
Asia	1	8	
America, Africa Oceania	0	0	
Austria	5	36	

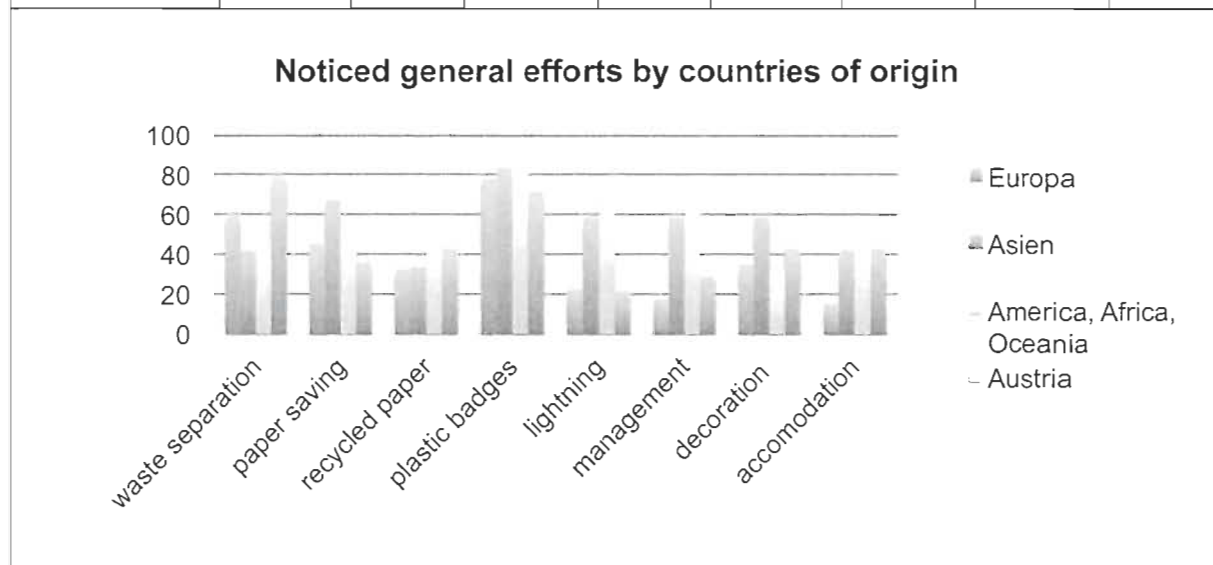
4.2.5.2. Perception and evaluation of the green elements

Table 17 shows that the green elements of the conference are differently perceived, when considering attendees' 'country of origin'. Interesting is that European and Austrian attendees are less likely to notice the general efforts 'lightning', 'management' and 'accommodation' in contrast to attendees from other countries. According to the chi-square test, there are only three out of eight efforts for which the chi-square test reveals a significant relationship: lightning $\alpha = 0.001$, management $\alpha = 0.005$, and accommodation $\alpha = 0.200$. However the requirements for five out of eight efforts for the chi-square test are not fulfilled, therefore the null hypothesis H_0 : *There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and*

noticed general efforts related to the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings, is accepted.

Table 17: Noticed general efforts by country of origin

Noticed general efforts by country of origin								
Country Efforts	Europe		Asia		America, Africa, Oceania		Austria	
	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
Waste separation	24	60	5	42	6	46	11	79
Paper saving	18	45	8	67	7	54	5	36
Recycled paper	13	33	4	33	7	54	6	43
Plastic badges	31	78	10	83	12	92	10	71
Lightning	9	23	7	58	10	77	3	21
Management	7	18	7	58	8	62	4	29
Decoration	14	35	7	58	4	31	6	43
Accommodation	6	15	5	41	6	46	6	43



A different perception of the green elements concerning the catering efforts, owing to attendees' 'country of origin' appears to be conclusive as table 18 shows. The results of the chi-square test reveal that there is no significant relationship between 'country of origin' and the perception of efforts. Therefore the null hypothesis $H0$: *There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and perception of catering efforts* is accepted.

The variable 'country of origin' did not influence attendees' perception of the environmental friendly accessibility of the accommodation and side-events as well as learning about the region.

Table 18: Noticed catering efforts by country of origin

Noticed catering efforts by country of origin								
Country Efforts	Europe		Asia		America, Africa, Oceania		Austria	
	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
dishes	29	73	8	67	13	100	11	78
organic	23	56	6	50	7	54	9	64
no exotic	11	28	2	16	4	31	3	21
regional	32	80	8	67	10	77	9	64
fair trade	34	85	9	75	9	70	9	64

Noticed catering efforts by country of origin

Effort	Europe	Asia	America, Africa, Oceania	Austria
dishes	73	67	100	78
organic	56	50	54	64
no exotic	28	16	31	21
regional	80	67	77	64
fair trade	85	75	70	64

The evaluation of the green elements was overwhelmingly positive and the chi-square test reveals that there is no significant relationship between attendees' 'country of origin' and the evaluation of the measures. Still, it should be kept in mind that the results are of limited validity as the requirements for the chi-square test are not given (see table 20, p. 82). However, no relationship between attendees' country of origin and the perception and evaluation of the green elements of the conference was identified.

4.2.5.3. Travel choice and evaluation of environmentally friendly alternatives

Amongst Austrian attendees the car was the most used transport option. Reasons are that on the one hand they are more likely to own a car and the distance from their place of living to the conference is reasonable. However, Austrian attendees are also more likely to be better informed about public transport than somebody from a foreign country. Therefore it is surprising that 50% of the Austrian attendees travelled with their own car and 36% as a passenger in a car to the conference, as depicted in table 19. Attendees who had a larger distance to travel such as from America, Africa, Oceania, Asia mainly used the plane and public transport to get to the conference.

Table 19: Travel to the conference by country of origin

Travel to conference by country of origin								
Country Efforts	Europe		Asia		America, Africa, Oceania		Austria	
	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
Own car	3	8	0	0	0	0	7	50
Train/bus	22	55	2	17	12	92	2	14
Passenger car	6	15	3	25	2	15	5	36
Plane	16	40	10	83	11	85	0	0
bike	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Travel to conference by country of origin				
own car	train/bus	passenger car	plane	
Europe	Europe	Europe	Europe	Europe
Asia	Asia	Asia	Asia	Asia
America, Africa, Oceania	America, Africa, Oceania	America, Africa, Oceania	America, Africa, Oceania	America, Africa, Oceania
Austria	Austria	Austria	Austria	Austria

The chi-square test reveals that there is no significant relationship between the choice of travel to the conference and attendees' 'country of origin'. Only the transport options train/bus $\alpha = 0.000$ and plane $\alpha = 0.000$ are statistically significant and fulfil the requirements for the chi-square test (see table 20). Therefore the null

hypothesis *H0: There is no significant relationship between the variable 'country of origin' and the travel to the conference* is accepted.

Concerning the testing of the statistical hypotheses, table 20 reveals that only seven out of 25 measured items fulfilled the requirements for the chi-square test. Other classification to increase the requirements were done, but they were not fulfilled either. Therefore the original classification was kept and the limited validity due to the missing requirements was accepted. All together no significant relationship between attendees' 'country of origin' and the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting was identified.

Due to the limit validity of the chi-square test and α -values the Hypothesis 3: *Attendees country of origin influences the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting*, is rejected.

Table 20: Validity of the chi-square test and alpha value

Item	α - value	Requirements fulfilled
Awareness that conference carries Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings	0.582	Yes 12.5% expected frequency < 5
Awareness Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings	0.005	No 50% expected frequency < 5
<i>Noticed general efforts</i>		
Waste separation	0.206	Yes 0% expected frequency < 5
Paper saving	0.416	Yes 0% expected frequency < 5
Recycled paper	0.542	No 25% expected frequency < 5
Plastic badges	0.554	No 37% expected frequency < 5
Lighting	0.001	No 25% expected frequency < 5
Management	0.005	No 37,5% expected frequency < 5
Decoration	0.457	Yes 12.5% expected frequency < 5
Accommodation	0.020	No 37,5% expected frequency < 5
<i>Noticed catering efforts</i>		
Dishes	0.164	No 37,5% expected frequency < 5
Organic	0.896	Yes 0% expected frequency < 5
No exotic	0.827	No 37.5% expected frequency < 5
Regional	0.360	No 37.5% expected frequency < 5
Fair trade	0.360	No 37.5% expected frequency < 5
Perception of efforts	0.804	No 50% expected frequency < 5
Contribution to quality	0.383	No 66% expected frequency < 5
<i>Travel to conference</i>		
Own car	0.000	No 37.5% expected frequency < 5
Train/bus	0.000	Yes 0% expected frequency < 5
Passenger car	0.374	No 37.5% expected frequency < 5
Plane	0.000	Yes 0% expected frequency < 5
Satisfaction public transport	0.314	No 87.5% expected frequency < 5
Informed about carbon-offsetting	0.055	No 66.7% expected frequency < 5
Accommodation accessible	0.239	No 58.3% expected frequency < 5
Side-events accessible	0.806	No 58.3% expected frequency < 5
Learning about region	0.297	No 58.3% expected frequency < 5

5. Discussion

The study was designed to gain a deeper knowledge of the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting and the ecolabelling process itself. The results of the qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires are merged together in order to enable a substantive discussion of the results in the light of the hypotheses and research questions.

5.1. The awareness of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings

The Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is considered to be an ecolabel for a niche product aimed at a specific clientele, which is dedicated to sustainability and not a product for the masses. The special niche of green meetings was not found to be suffering from an overload of available ecolabels leading to their total ignorance, as previously reported in tourism literature (BUDEANU 2007, 504). However, the responses of the green meeting appointee and the data retrieved from the questionnaires indicate a low awareness concerning the ecolabelling of green meetings and the ecolabel itself. For the green meeting appointee the availability of a national label for the conference was a novelty, even though international green meeting initiatives were known. This is sound with previous findings about the general low awareness about ecolabels in tourism (BUDEANU 2007, 504). However, there is also literature conflicting with these findings. It is argued that in Austria there are good conditions for the proliferation of ecolabels, as there are good environmental protective measures and therefore good prerequisites for the functioning of ecolabels (FONT 2001, 2). Further, the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is related to the Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism, which is a trustworthy and well-established brand (HAMELE 2002, 196). Through its connection with the Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism, the ecolabel can profit from its popularity. Additionally it has been found that in alpine regions, such as Alpbach, international and European labels are less relevant whereas governmental run ecolabels are considered to be more reliable and credible (PRÖBSTL and MÜLLER 2012, 9ff). Despite these good prerequisites the awareness for the Austrian ecolabel was found to be low. This can be explained with an information deficit on environmental improvements and/or ecolabelling schemes among congress facilities and event managers. Research

indicates, that some tourism facility managers find it difficult to find this information and therefore are not willing to engage in environmental measures (LEWIS and CASSELLS 2010, 10).

Only a minority of attendees was aware that the conference was ecolabelled and even less knew the ecolabel in general. Despite information provided by the conference organisation team through e-mails and homepage, attendees were relatively resistant, absorbing the fact that the conference was ecolabelled with Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings. The low awareness amongst attendees can be explained with tourists' general low awareness about ecolabelling schemes found in other studies (MILLAR and BALOGLU 2011, 303), or a general fatigue concerning ecolabels in the German speaking alpine region, owing to the numerous available ecolabels (PRÖBSTL and MÜLLER 2004, 5). Still one needs to be careful with comparisons of ecolabelling for traditional tourism with ecolabelling for events. Conference attendees and tourists differ in their nature concerning their importance of ecolabelling for the tourism product. For the conference attendees the ecolabel merely functions as an added value. This is in contrast to tourists who chose a tourism product based on it having an ecolabel or not. So there might be other reasons for the low awareness such as attendees' nationality. The findings show that awareness concerning the ecolabel was the highest amongst Austrian conference attendees. When looking at attendees' awareness by countries, it is conclusive that the ecolabel is known more amongst Austrian than international attendees. That national ecolabels are known over their borders is a rarity, and it is known that market recognition cannot be guaranteed because international tourists are usually unfamiliar with a national ecolabelling scheme (JARVIS et al. 2010, 84).

The results of the interviews and the questionnaires reveal that the awareness concerning the ecolabelling for green meetings and the ecolabel itself is low. Thus, *hypothesis 1: The level of awareness concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is low*, is accepted.

5.2. The perception of an ecolabelled green meeting and associated benefits

The majority of attendees noticed the green elements of the conference concerning the energy supply, catering, and travel. The questionnaire reveals that the overwhelming majority of attendees perceived the green elements as positive and contributing to the quality of the conference. Attendees' positive perception of an ecolabelled green meeting and its green elements, is also supported by the facility manager and the green meeting appointee. The positive perception of the conference's green elements confirm research that the implementation of environmentally friendly initiatives can improve the quality of tourism businesses (TOMESCU 2011, 695). Arguments stating that most green meeting efforts go completely unnoticed (GMIC 2012a), or that sustainable business initiatives might jeopardize customer satisfaction and enjoyment, which has been stated by business owners (AYUSO 2007, 146; VERNON et al. 2003, 63), could not be supported.

However, there were some critical voices against the green elements as stated in the interviews and the comments made on the questionnaire. The remoteness of Alpbach has been criticised and the 'greenness' of the conference was questioned. According to the facility manager, some attendees are very critical concerning the catering of the food, especially concerning exotic products such as bananas even though they are labelled as fair trade. The critique at the conference can be explained with attendees' advanced knowledge concerning sustainability due to their academic background. As they have most likely been confronted with sustainability before due to their research, they are considered to be more environmentally aware and more critical towards the green elements of the conference. This is supported in literature as usually environmentally aware consumers are found to be the ones that are the most sceptic (VIRGIL and BURTON 2011, 631).

The green elements were differently perceived, some more than others. Especially concerning the catering this difference was visible. The argument that catering can play a vital role for delivering green messages but may be overlooked by more visible elements such as waste management or recycling cannot be supported (LAING and FROST 2010, 265). Actually it is the other way around. In this study green elements such as energy efficient lightning are noticed less than organic products. As green

elements in the catering of the conference received a lot of attention, they are considered to represent a useful vector for the communication of environmental consciousness.

The green elements are considered to raise environmental awareness. However, as not all elements are noticed in the same way, attendees need to be informed about them in different ways. Attendees are actively informed about the green elements of an ecolabelled green meeting through labelling for the catering, information in e-mails and certificates concerning the energy supply for the building are provided. That active information campaigns are helpful to communicate environmental measures and raise awareness is supported in literature. Environmental activities should be made clearly visible to guests in order to invite them to participate, raise environmental awareness, and thereby create a demand for green alternatives (BOHDANOWICZ 2005, 201).

According to the facility manager, a green meeting is a useful instrument to improve the image of the organising body. In this study an ecolabelled green meeting has been found to be desirable for marketing purposes, public relations, and corporate social responsibility reporting. The findings support literature on the importance for companies to have a positive image concerning the environment. For example corporate social responsibility is considered to be an important element in strategic management as companies are increasingly under pressure to foster environmental and social responsibility to improve their image (ZHANG et al. 2010, 10110). Further an ecolabelled green meeting was found to be beneficial for the image of the organising body, which supports the argument that there is a close link between events, brand image and reputation (FESTA et al. 2009, 252). Another benefit reported in this study is achieving market differentiation through ecolabelling. An ecolabelled green meeting is considered to allow the organising body to differentiate their event from the conventional event industry and thereby benefit in form of a competitive advantage. This is supported in literature, where the ecolabelling of green events has been found to enable a competitive advantage for companies (HENDERSON 2011, 252). An essential aspect to achieve these image benefits is the finding that a green meeting needs an ecolabel to verify the environmental claims made. According to the facility manager, when the Congress Centrum Alpbach was

transforming their offers towards sustainability, they were confronted with demands for external verification. As there is increasing consumer scepticism towards the green claims of companies, owing to the numerous examples of green washing, ecolabelling is of central concern (PARGUEL et al. 2011, 17). This is also true for green meetings as their ecolabelling can prevent reproaches of green washing and distinguish green washed meetings from true green meetings. Here, the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings has been found trustworthy to fulfil this job. The need for an ecolabel supports the argument, that even though there are numerous studies about tourists being sceptic against ecolabelling, ecolabelling is still tourists' most preferred green attribute, and reflects the need for external verification of environmental claims within the tourism industry (MILLAR and BALOGLU 2011, 307; TOMESCU 2011, 695).

The argument that a green meeting is attractive because it leads to reduced costs could not be supported. The ecolabelling of the conference and other green meetings was found to be accompanied with an increase of costs. However, this increase is only minimal and therefore not considered to inhibit the ecolabelling of green meetings.

Despite some criticism, attendees perceived the green elements of the conference as positive and contributing to the quality of the conference. The ecolabelling of green meetings is considered to positively influence the image of the organising body and may create a competitive advantage through differentiation. Thus, *hypothesis 2: The ecolabelled conference including its green elements is positively perceived by the attendees and contributes to the image of the organisation team's research facility*, is accepted.

5.3. The influence of socio-demographic variables on the perception of a green meeting

Concerning the perception of a green meeting, it was tested, if the perception of the conference including its green elements is influenced by the independent variable 'country of origin'. That the classification 'country of origin' can influence attendees' perception of the conference appeared to be conclusive and was statistically tested,

as it was the only available variable about attendees' profile. However, no statistic significant relationships where the requirements for the chi-square test were given could be identified. Thus hypothesis 3: *Attendees' country of origin influences the perception of an ecolabelled green meeting*, is rejected.

Rejecting or accepting the null hypothesis owing to not significant results does not mean that the null hypothesis is correct. It only allows concluding that the research was not suitable to allow a statement about the contrary statistical hypothesis (BORTZ and DÖRING 2006, 27). Philosopher Karl Popper introduced the idea of falsifiability or falsification meaning that that universal theories are never verified or confirmed beyond all doubt, but that they can only be falsified (OMEROD 2009). This idea of falsifiability shall be kept in mind because in this research the assumptions for the chi-square test are not given, which limits the validity concerning the rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis respectively.

Questions about the socio-demographic background of the conference attendees and their influence of the perception of green meetings remain. As research on green events suggests that the profile of green event goers should be investigated (LAING and FROST 2010, 265), this aspect should be considered in future research. In order to increase the validity it is suggested to test the hypothesis above with a larger sample where the requirements are fulfilled.

5.4. The perception of the ecolabelling process

According to literature, high costs and a lack of time and knowledge present obstacles for pursuing ecolabels (AYUSO 2007, 146). Similar, higher costs, over boarding bureaucracy and high organisational efforts were fears that have been reported in association with the ecolabelling process of green meetings. However, according to the facility manager, these fears are arbitrary as the congress facility already fulfils many criteria and there is a green meeting manager as a contact person.

According to both interview partners, the ecolabelling process is easy, and there are no real barriers event managers are confronted with. The partial fulfilment and

flexibility of the criteria, and the assistance through the congress facility were identified as big advantages for the feasibility of the ecolabelling process. This is in conflict with studies on the perception of ecolabelling processes and environmental management measures in tourism literature, as they are usually considered to require significant workloads and financial investments and to be difficult to implement (LEWIS and CASSELLS 2010, 10). Literature reveals that ecolabelling is considered to more expensive which constitutes a barrier for ecolabelling in tourism (Jarvis et al. 2010, 85). This is in conflict with the findings of this study as there is only a marginal increase of costs that is not considered to present a barrier.

The ecolabelling of green meetings is considered to be handed on a silver platter, as it was developed to be attractive for event managers. Sure, higher organisational efforts and financial resources are required, but in comparison to the overall organisation and costs, higher resource intensity was not found to constitute an obstacle to ecolabel a green meeting. Even though in this case the argument of over boarding resource intensity presenting a barrier has proven wrong, the fear of it should not be underestimated and research should be dedicated to identify how to overcome it. As no tangible obstacle against ecolabelling was identified, the decision for or against ecolabelling is considered to be merely a decision of willingness, not feasibility. That the willingness to transform towards sustainability lies in the mindset of the business is also supported by previous studies (JARVIS et al. 2010, 90; VERNON et al. 2003, 66). This suggests that for the advancement of ecolabelled green meetings, organisation teams need to have a positive attitude towards sustainability within the event industry and willing to change their business as usual.

The interviews reveal that the ecolabelling process is only feared to be difficult. In fact, it is perceived to be easy by the facility manager and the green meeting appointee alike. Thus hypothesis 4: *The ecolabelling process of the conference is perceived to be difficult*, is rejected.

5.5. The impulse for ecolabelling

The results indicate that the congress facility plays a crucial role in the ecolabelling process. According to the facility manager, the overwhelming majority of ecolabelled

green meetings are the result of the facility management informing event managers about the possibility of ecolabelling and environmental as well as image benefits that can be derived from it. The congress facility's commitment to sustainability is not only reflected in transforming their offers towards sustainability but also actively informing event managers about the option of ecolabelling their event as green meeting. Sensitising event managers about the issue of sustainability within conference and business tourism is considered to be essential for the proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings. Similar, previous research reveals that tourists who were informed and sensitised on environmental issues are more likely to be involved in protective measures (TOMESCU 2011, 696). Thus environmentally informed event managers are more likely to ecolabel their meetings. Literature concerning green events argues that the proliferation of green events depends on event managers, who have a positive disposition towards sustainability (HENDERSON 2011, 151). This supports the argument that a growing environmental responsibility amongst event managers is considered to create a new generation of event managers, which changes the mindset of the event industry towards sustainability (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 11).

Apart from the congress facility's educative role on environmental issues and ecolabelling, they also alleviate event managers' fears about the resource intensity associated with the ecolabelling process. According to the green meeting appointee and the facility manager, sufficient information is provided about the expected workload and the criteria that have to be fulfilled. Furthermore, some of the criteria required for the ecolabel are already fulfilled by the facility itself and therefore reduce organisational efforts. Last but not least the congress facility provides a green meeting manager, who assists in the planning process. As money, time and expertise are the most critical resources affecting the success or failure of initiatives attempting to promote the adoption of sustainable tourism (HALME and FADEEVA 2001, 160), it is suggested that the resources provided by the congress facility are decisive for the ecolabelling of a green meetings. Therefore the congress facility is considered to play a crucial role in the proliferation of ecolabelled green meetings through sensitising on environmental issues and providing sufficient information and assistance in the ecolabelling process.

In this study, the organisation team did not need to be sensitised for sustainability within conference and business tourism. They already wanted to implement

environmental friendly measures as a result of their commitment before they knew that external verification in form of ecolabelling was available. A feeling of environmental responsibility among the organisation team was identified as a strong motivator to arrange the conference as green as possible. The results suggest that supporting a green image and personal commitment are strong motives for hosting a green meeting. This is sound with tourism literature about the implementation of environmental practices in hotels, which identify ethical considerations as incentive (AYUSO 2007, 146). Value driven reasons, like feeling responsible for the environment and the society were identified as reasons for joining ecolabelling schemes and the uptake of environmental measures in tourism facilities (LEWIS and CASSELLS 2010, 15f). As the development of environmental sustainability is value driven, it is influenced by personal, sociocultural and situational factors. Therefore the path to greenness is varying as no individual or business is the same (TZSCHENTKE et al. 2008, 126f). This suggests that there are many different stories to tell why event organisers choose to ecolabel their meeting and future research should be dedicated to this

The Congress Centrum Alpbach was chosen because of its good reputation, the importance to support the image of the research facility and to appropriately present the theme of the conference. This is in contrast to literature about the main function of ecolabels arguing they are intended to influence consumption behaviour towards sustainability meaning that e.g. tourism facilities are chosen based on whether they carry an ecolabel or not (BUCKLEY 2002, 185). Meaning that an environmentally aware organisation team chooses a congress facility based on the availability of ecolabelling, and thus encourages congress facilities to offer it. In contrast to this, the findings of the study reveal that the choice of the congress facility was not based on its availability of ecolabelling but based on other considerations as mentioned above. The ecolabelling of the conference and its associated benefits were considered as a 'cherry on top' and did not constitute a decisive factor when choosing the congress facility. Similar has been reported in tourism literature arguing that ecolabels are barely a decisive criterion in tourists' purchasing decision as other considerations are more important (LÜBBERT 2001, 80).

The organisation team was already committed to sustainability but did not choose the congress facility because ecolabelling was available. However, they were

encouraged by the congress facility to ecolabel their conference. Acknowledging the decisive role the congress facility has in the ecolabelling process *hypothesis 5: The congress facility sets the impulse for the ecolabelling of green meetings*, is accepted. However, this impulse was only observed for this specific congress facility. Future research should be dedicated to investigate the role of other congress facilities in the ecolabelling process to allow a broader application of the findings.

5.6. The perception of incentivised environmentally friendly travel

One central criterion of Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is to encourage environmentally friendly travel to the conference. Facility manager and green meeting appointee alike are aware of travel related emissions and efforts have been made to reduce them. For international attendees a shuttle bus from Munich was organised and information about the possibility to use public transport instead of using the car or even travel by plane was provided. Next to this also discounted train tickets were available to further encourage the use of public transport. Such incentivised strategies are considered to provide quick results and a more enthusiastic compliance towards sustainability (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 6ff). Literature suggests that attendees could be incentivised with prizes for travelling the furthest distance with public transport (DESILETS and DICKERSON 2008, 389), which is interesting for future research.

Furthermore, attendees were informed about the option of carbon offsetting their travel, however the results show an ambiguous information status. Only one third knew about this possibility. However, the questionnaire did not give away if attendees did carbon offsetting or not, and there is only limited research about travellers' awareness and participation in carbon offsetting. There appears to be a lack of education and awareness of the concept of climate change and offsetting in the travel and tourism industry. Even though there is a willingness to mitigate the effects of climate change from activities associated with tourism, there is the need for further education (DODDS et al. 2008, 146). Thus the contribution of carbon offsetting to reduce the conference's emissions is considered to be limited.

Even though several studies show that consumers are willing to change their consumption behaviours to preserve the environment (D'SOUZA 2004, 179), in the case of consuming travel to the conference, this cannot be supported in this study. Despite the efforts made to reduce energy intense modes of travel, such as car and plane, travel to the congress centre is still linked to a significant amount of emissions. The results of the questionnaire reveal that the majority of attendees mainly travelled via train or bus, plane, or used the car to get to the conference. International attendees had to travel via plane to an international airport and then take public transport or the available shuttle bus to get to the conference. Acknowledging the international background of the conference, which is visible through attendees' country of origin, emissions coming from travel remain significant. Recognising the impact of attendees' travel choice, supports the argument that a green event is only sustainable if the event goes behave sustainably too. Literature suggests that the sustainability of an event can be guaranteed with prescriptive measures. However, such measures carry the risk to spoil the event and lose customers (HENDERSON 2011, 248). Facility manager and organisation team alike, are aware about this problem and know they cannot force the conference attendees to switch to environmental friendlier modes of transportation.

Amongst the facility manager and the green meeting appointee an acceptance concerning the inability to significantly reduce travel emissions was observed. They accept that travel will remain a challenge for the advancement of sustainability in conference and business tourism and cannot demand that their attendees travel e.g. by ship instead of plane. The facility manager and the green meeting appointee know that due to the remoteness of the facility and nature of an international conference itself, travel related impacts are inevitable. Both are aware about the limitations of their environmental measures, as they have to accept the boundaries of the business reality. They know that they can only contribute to sustainability within their possible scope of actions, which has to be economically and feasible as well. Reducing the travel emissions to a minimum is considered to be something outside of their scope of action. This supports studies on the acceptance of tensions between the feeling of environmental responsibility and the business reality of tourism (JARVIS et al. 2010, 91). Here standards and guidelines of ecolabels can take over a compromising role and can create a balance between maintaining profitability and reducing

environmental impacts (RAJ and MUSGRAVE 2009, 8), as happened with the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

Both interview partners and the results of the questionnaire alike, reveal that travel to the conference remains an issue of concern. Despite the efforts made, the environmental effect is considered to be only limited. Facility manager and green meeting appointee know that attendees' choice of travel is not tangible and accept the boundaries of their business concerning environmental measures. Thus *hypothesis 6: Efforts to incentivise environmental friendly travel alternatives are of limited effect*, is accepted.

5.7. Limitations of research

This research is based on a case study and focused on a specific research facility organising a conference, a specific ecolabel and a specific congress facility that offers ecolabelling for green meetings. The aim of this research was to provide an insight into the matter of green meetings and the instrument of ecolabelling for the advancement of sustainable events. The results are considered to be primarily viable within the context of this case study. Applying the results to another congress facility, ecolabel, organising body and event has to be done cautiously. Before generalising the results, more research on a broader basis is necessary, such as investigating more congress facilities, organisation teams, attendees, events and ecolabels alike.

6. Conclusion

The emergence of green meetings represents a transformation of the tourism mass market towards sustainability through the integration of sustainability principles and practices into conference and business tourism. Ecolabelling for green meetings is a promising tool to reduce the environmental impacts of events associated with conference and business tourism. For the ecolabel to facilitate a successful transformation towards sustainability, the perception of the ecolabelling process and the green meeting itself, including its green elements is considered to be essential.

The Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism is a well-established brand. Its adapted version The Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings is considered to profit from that popularity. Still the awareness concerning the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings among event stakeholders is low and supports research on the general low awareness of ecolabels in tourism. This can be explained with the international background of the conference attendees, the ecolabel's recent establishment, and its application in a specific tourism segment constituting a niche market.

The majority of attendees perceived the ecolabelled green meeting including its green elements as positive and contributing to the quality of the conference. However, some attendees were sceptical towards the green claims, manifested in the comments on the questionnaires. This is considered to be the result of ubiquitous green washing and attendees' elaborated knowledge about sustainability. Green elements in the catering were noticed more than green elements concerning waste management and energy efficiency, thus presenting a useful vector to transport environmental consciousness. This difference in the perception of green elements should be addressed in future research. How, if at all, attendees' country of origin and other socio-demographic variables affected the perception of ecolabelled green meetings could not be identified, but provides a rich field of study for further research.

An ecolabelled green meeting is considered to be beneficial for the image of the organising body as it can be used for internal marketing purposes, public relations and corporate social responsibility reporting. Moreover, concerning reproaches of green washing, ecolabelling positively contributes to the organisation body's image, as consumer scepticism against green claims is present. The ecolabelling of the

conference was perceived as 'cherry of top' suggesting that other considerations than the availability of ecolabelling are important when choosing a congress facility.

The main reason to ecolabel the conference as a green meeting was a feeling of environmental responsibility amongst the organisation team. The intention to minimise the conference's environmental impacts and thereby support employees' personal values and the research facility's image, existed before being aware about the possibility to ecolabel the conference. This suggests that the motivation for green meetings is intrinsically derived. Event managers, who are already fond of environmental measures in business and private life, want a sustainable event for its own good. Therefore they should be made aware of the impacts their event can have, as environmental responsibility is a strong motivator for the implementation of environmental measures and ecolabelling.

The main barrier against the ecolabelling of a green meeting is their *perceived* resource intensity. Customers are afraid of over boarding costs, time and organisational efforts, associated with the ecolabelling process. But in fact an ecolabelled green meeting at the researched facility comes along with only a small increase of resource use in comparison to the overall effort required to organise a conference. The congress facility already fulfils many criteria anyway and through their available green meeting manager, they provide assistance and guidance in the ecolabelling process. Therefore, resource intensity does not constitute a real barrier for the ecolabelling of green meetings, but rather a lack of event managers' willingness instead.

There needs to be a push from the licensee facility for the ecolabelling of green meetings. The facility informs the customer about the environmental impacts associated with their planned event, the required resources, the benefits they will derive, and provides assistance in the planning process. Thus the facility is considered to play a vital role the decision process for or against ecolabelling. This suggests that if congress facilities profoundly inform about the importance of ecolabelling and assist event managers with their organisational efforts, they have the ability to encourage ecolabelling for green meetings. Here, research on the

perception of the ecolabelling process at other congress facilities is necessary to support this argument on a broader base.

Despite the environmental improvements made, to incentivise environmentally friendly travel to the congress facility remains a challenge. First, the evaluated congress facility is located remotely in the Alps and second, international conferences will always rely on international attendees, who have to fly to the destination and thereby create a significant amount of emissions. These emissions will always remain a part of international conference and business tourism. However, potential lies in the encouragement of the use of public transport or car sharing possibilities and research dedicated to incentivise their use is considered to be promising. Both, facility manager and green meeting appointee accept tensions between their feeling of environmental responsibility and business reality, and focus on the areas that are economical viable and technically possible.

Future research should investigate ecolabelling for events associated with conference and business tourism on a broader scope. For example, several ecolabelled green meetings should be investigated to get hold of the experiences of various event managers, attendees, and managers of licensed congress facilities with the ecolabelling process of the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Meetings.

7. Appendix

7.1.Literature

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7.2. Questionnaires

7.2.1. Qualitative questionnaires

Interview 1: Green Meeting Appointee, Verena Melzer, Bakk. tech.

- Wussten Sie bereits vor Beginn ihrer Organisationstätigkeit als Green Meeting Appointee über das Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Green Meetings Bescheid?
 - Woher wussten Sie davon, wann haben Sie davon erfahren?
 - Wo glauben Sie sind Green Meetings bekannt?
- Von wem kam der Anstoß die Konferenz zertifizieren zu lassen?
 - Warum haben Sie Ihre Konferenz zertifizieren lassen?
 - Welchen Nutzen haben Sie erwartet?
 - Welchen letztendlich gezogen?
 - Gab es Argumente die gegen eine Zertifizierung sprachen?
 - Was müsste passieren, dass Sie sich dagegen aussprechen?
 - Gab es kostenmäßig Unterschiede zu einem normalen Meeting?
- War die Zertifizierung der Konferenz ein Entscheidungskriterium für das Congress Centrum Alpbach?
 - Wieso ist es wichtig für ihr Institut/BOKU in Green Meeting abzuhalten?
 - Welche Rolle spielt Nachhaltigkeit auf Ihrem Institut/BOKU?
- Gab es Schwierigkeiten im Zertifizierungsprozess?
 - Wo sehen Sie Schwachstellen?
 - Wie haben Sie diese bewältigt?
 - Wo sehen Sie die Stärken?
- Wie haben TeilnehmerInnen die Zertifizierung wahrgenommen?
 - Was wurde besonders wahrgenommen?
 - Was weniger?

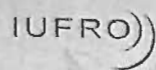
- Wie schätzen Sie die negative Auswirkungen von Meetings allgemein ein?
- Welchen Beitrag leistet Ihrer Meinung nach die Zertifizierung, um negative Einwirkungen auf die Umwelt zu verringern?
 - Wo besonders gut?
 - Wo auffallend gering?
- Wie bewerten Sie die Initiative Green Meetings Austria/das Label?
- Weitere Anmerkungen?

Interview 2: Facility Manager, Georg Hechenblaikner, MBA

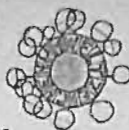
- Sie haben vor drei Jahren begonnen das Angebot des in Richtung Nachhaltigkeit zu optimieren. Was waren die ausschlaggebenden Gründe Lizenznehmer zu werden?
 - Welchen Nutzen hat sich das Congress Centrum Alpbach Management davon versprochen?
- Das Congress Centrum Alpbach nimmt eine Vorreiterrolle für Green Meetings ein. Wie beurteilen Sie das Interesse für Zertifizierte Green Meetings?
 - Sie sind als Lizenznehmer verpflichtet auf die Möglichkeit auf die Zertifizierung von Green Meetings hinzuweisen – kommen Organisatoren eher von sich aus auf die Idee, oder müssen Sie mehr Überzeugungsarbeit leisten?
 - Welche Organisatoren haben von sich aus den Wunsch zur Zertifizierung geäußert?
 - Welche erst mussten Sie überzeugen?
- Können Sie erläutern aus welchen Gründen Organisatoren sich für eine Zertifizierung entscheiden und aus welchen dagegen?
 - Glauben Sie die Möglichkeit Green Meetings abzuhalten stellt für Organisatoren ein Entscheidungskriterium für das Congress Centrum Alpbach dar?

- Für welche Organisatoren ist das ganz besonders wichtig ein Green Meeting abzuhalten und wieso?
- Wie beurteilen Sie den Prozess der Zertifizierung aus der Sicht von Organisatoren? Gab es da schon mal Schwierigkeiten?
 - Welche Faktoren sind ausschlaggebend für das Überkommen eventueller Schwierigkeiten?
 - Wo sehen Sie Stärken?
- Laut ihrer Broschüre werden dieses Jahr 50% aller TeilnehmerInnen auf einem Green Meeting gewesen sein. Bemerken sie, dass Sie auf einem Green Meeting sind?
 - Welche Aspekte besonders
 - Welche weniger?
- Welchen Beitrag leistet Ihrer Meinung nach die Zertifizierung, um negative Einwirkungen auf die Umwelt zu verringern?
 - Wo besonders gut?
 - Wo auffallend gering?
- Weitere Anmerkungen?

7.2.2. Quantitative questionnaire



Lizenznehmer
Österreichisches
Umweltzeichen
Green Meetings



Forests for People Conference 2012
22.5. - 24.5.2012

DEAR PARTICIPANT!

Please be so kind and complete this evaluation form. After completion, return it to the reception desk in the Congress Centre. THANK YOU!

1. Did you know before your arrival in Alpbach that the event carries the "Austrian Green Meetings Certificate"?

☒ yes ☐ no

If yes, how did you hear about it?

I read it in the program

2. Have you heard about the "Austrian Green Meetings Certificate" before?

☐ yes ☒ no

If yes, how did you hear about it?

3. Have you noticed efforts to protect the environment and to save resources in this event, and have you noticed some success?

☒ yes ☐ no

If yes, which?

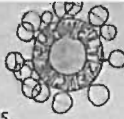
- ☐ Waste separation
- ☒ Paper saving (photocopies, printed material, advertising material)
- ☒ Use of recycled paper
- ☒ Possibility to return plastic badges
- ☒ Energy-efficient lighting
- ☐ Energy-efficient utilities management (ventilation, air condition)
- ☐ Environmentally-friendly decoration material
- ☒ Accommodation with environment certificate(s)
- ☐ Others:

4. Have you noticed efforts to protect the environment and to save scarce resources associated with the catering of this event, and have you noticed some success?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ I did not participated in any catered events

If yes which?

- ☒ Reusable dishes and glasses
- ☐ Organic products
- ☒ No exotic produce
- ☐ Regional products
- ☐ Fair trade products
- ☐ Others:



5. Do you perceive these measures referred to in question 3 and 4 as positive?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

6. In your opinion, did these measures contribute positively to the quality of the event?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

7. Where are you from?

Country: USA

8. How did you travel to the event?

☐ with my own car ☐ as a passenger in a car
☐ by bicycle ☒ by airplane
☒ by train or bus ☐ others.

If you used public transport to get to Alpbach, how satisfied were you with how the event organizers promoted this option on the whole? (Information, accessibility, connections, duration ...)

☒ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ indifferent ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied

Reasons:

9. Were you informed about the possibility of carbon-offsetting before your trip, or did the organisers take care of the carbon-offsetting for your journey?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

10. Was your accommodation accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

11. Were the side-events accessible in a comfortable and environmentally-friendly manner?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

12. During the course of the event, have you learned more about environmental initiatives, social activities or cultural events in this region?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

13. Would you like to add any further comments:

Members of organizing group were very friendly and helpful. The mix of conference participants was great. Conference center facilities and the location is very special. Great Conference!

7.3. Interviews

7.3.1. Interview 1: Green Meeting Appointee, Verena Melzer, Bakk.tech.

Wussten Sie bereits vor Beginn ihrer Organisationstätigkeit als Green Meeting Beauftragte der Konferenz über das Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Green Meetings Bescheid?

Ich kannte das Österreichische Umweltzeichen generell vom Namen her und habe auch gewusst, dass es Green Events gibt. Allerdings habe ich das nicht unbedingt im Zusammenhang gesehen. Ich wusste nicht, dass es ein österreichisches Umweltzeichen für Events gibt und wusste auch keine Details darüber sondern nur, dass es Betriebe gibt die zertifiziert sind.

Wie sind Sie auf die Zertifizierung mit Österreichischen Umweltzeichen für Green Meetings gestoßen?

Durch die Konferenz und meine Organisationstätigkeit. Ich wusste zwar dass es Zertifizierungen für Green Meetings außerhalb Österreichs gibt , dass es aber konkret eine österreichische gab wusste ich dann erst als ich für die Konferenz zuständig war.

Welche anderen Labels, Zertifizierungen, Awards waren Ihnen bereits bekannt?

EVVC und Green Globe.

Wie schätzen Sie den Bekanntheitsgrad von Green Meeting Initiativen im Konferenz- und Geschäftstourismus ein, speziell im Wissenschaftsbetrieb?

Ich denke schon, dass es da ein bestimmtes Klientel gibt, eine Zielgruppe oder ein Bereich von Leuten die das kennen. Vor allem im naturwissenschaftlichen Bereich oder im sozialwissenschaftlichen Bereich, da sie sich dort häufig mit Nachhaltigkeit beschäftigen. Auf der Messe (Anm. 5. Tagungsmesse „Green Meetings & Green Office“ am 23.10. 2012, Wien) haben wir gesehen, dass es Leute gibt die gezielt nach Green Meetings fragen. Deshalb glaube ich schon, dass es eine Community

gibt die sich für Green Meetings interessieren aber das sind mit Sicherheit nicht alle, weil es einfach für viele einfach keine Rolle spielt.

Von wem kam der Anstoß die Konferenz zertifizieren zu lassen?

Im Prinzip vom Organisationsteam selbst. Als ich ins Organisationsteam dazugekommen bin sind die grundlegenden Punkte der Konferenz schon festgestanden. Unser Institut bemüht sich schon seit längerem darum, Veranstaltungen so grün wie möglich zu gestalten. Zum Beispiel die ISSRM 2009 berücksichtigte Green Meeting Kriterien in der Organisation und Durchführung, allerdings war die Konferenz nicht zertifiziert. Es war also bereits geplant, dass Forests for People auch so grün wie möglich abgehalten wird. Somit hat es sich dann perfekt ergänzt, dass es uns möglich war die Konferenz gleich zertifizieren zu lassen. Da wir so und so im Bereich Green Meetings etwas unternehmen wollten war es klar, dass wir uns zertifizieren lassen als wir rausgefunden haben, dass es im Congress Centrum Alpbach möglich ist. Aber wir hätten die Konferenz auch dort gemacht, hätte es die Zertifizierungsmöglichkeit nicht gegeben.

Welcher Nutzen wurde von der Zertifizierung erwartet?

Erstens weil im Profil unserer Forschungseinrichtung Nachhaltigkeit ein Thema ist. Das passt natürlich zu unserer Außendarstellung, dass wir als Universität für Bodenkultur und als unser Institut bei dem Nachhaltigkeit eine Rolle spielt unsere Konferenz auch zertifizieren lassen. Man will das auch einfach, das ist auch die Einstellung unserer Mitarbeiter. Da wir uns auch so im täglichen Leben mit Fair Trade, regionalen Produkten, und Mülltrennung befasst sind, macht man das natürlich.

Zweitens ist es ja dann tatsächlich eine CO2 Einsparung und man sieht es auch einfach: wir hatten viel weniger Papier. Zusätzlich haben wir uns auch erwartet, dass jeder Einzelne das Gefühl bekommt einen Beitrag geleistet zu haben.

Gab es einen Unterschied zwischen erwarteten und gezogenen Nutzen?

Die oben genannten Punkte wurden erfüllt. Das einzige was vielleicht ein bisschen untergegangen ist, aber das wurde auch nicht konkret angestrebt, war die Wahrnehmung unter den Teilnehmern. Wir hätten uns gewünscht, dass das ein bisschen stärker wahrgenommen wird. Doch viele Teilnehmer haben gesagt nein sie wussten nicht, dass es ein Green Meeting ist, obwohl es auf der Homepage stand, in einigen E-mails erwähnt wurde usw.

Wieso ist Ihnen die Wahrnehmung der Teilnehmer wichtig?

Bewusstseinsbildung. Die sind auch alle in einem ähnlichen Metier unterwegs und gerade Nachhaltigkeit, nur soviel nutzen wie zuwächst, kommt auch aus dem Bereich der Forstwirtschaft. Dadurch, dass es auch eine forstwirtschaftliche Veranstaltung war und Papier und Holz eine Rolle spielen gehört das einfach dazu. Auch, dass sie sich ein bisschen Gedanken machen und dann noch mit dem Bus oder Zug zu fahren anstelle zu fliegen. Einfach um ein bisschen einen Anstoß zum Nachdenken geben.

Gab es irgendetwas, das gegen die Zertifizierung gesprochen hat?

Im Bezug auf diese Veranstaltung nicht.

Gab es Bedenken, dass etwas nicht so laufen könnte wie gewünscht?

Dadurch, dass dieser Kriterienkatalog sehr vielseitig ist hat man viele Möglichkeiten. Was unmöglich gewesen wäre, wäre alle Punkte einzuhalten. Weil das wäre ein Aufwand gewesen der sich zeitlich gar nicht ausgegangen wäre. Zum Beispiel gab es den Punkt, dass man Webseiten barrierefrei machen kann und da hätten wir einen Programmierer engagieren müssen der uns das macht. Wenn es eine Vorgabe gewesen wäre wirklich alle Punkte zu erfüllen, dann wäre das irrsinnig schwierig geworden. Ein anderer Hinderungsgrund können Kosten sein. Gerade bei solchen Veranstaltungen ist man sehr stark budgetorientiert. Dadurch stellt sich immer die Frage ob man sich den Mehraufwand leisten kann. Wenn die Zertifizierung jetzt mit erheblichen Mehrkosten verbunden wäre, dann wäre es wahrscheinlich nicht möglich. In unserem Fall war es nicht so weil viele Dinge sowieso vom Kongresszentrum gemacht wurden und viele Dinge uns auch Geld gespart haben

wie z.B. weniger Papier wodurch Kosten eingespart wurden. Hätten alle Kriterien erfüllt werden müssen wäre die Zertifizierung unter Umständen für uns nicht möglich gewesen, Dadurch, dass das ja nicht der Fall war, konnten wir die Veranstaltung problemlos zertifizieren lassen. Wir haben auch mehr Punkte erreicht als die Mindestpunkteanzahl.

Was ich jetzt nicht sagen kann ist, ob uns das Kongresszentrum weniger gekostet hätte, wenn wir kein Green Meeting gemacht hätten z.B. im Bereich des Caterings. Für uns hat jedenfalls aus Kostengründen nichts dagegen gesprochen weil es uns nicht teurer vorgekommen ist als andere Veranstaltungen, die wir bereits gemacht haben und nicht zertifiziert sind.

Wäre der Preis höher gewesen hätten Sie es dann gemacht?

Das ist schwierig zu sagen weil die Budgetvorgaben nicht von mir kommen. Über diesen Spielraum, was möglich wäre und was nicht, kann ich keine Auskunft geben. Klar kann man höhere Konferenzbeiträge verlangen allerdings besteht dann auch die Gefahr, dass dann keiner mehr kommt und das nur dafür, dass es ein Green Meeting ist? Kosten sind sicher kein unwesentlicher Punkt aber ich kann keine genaue Auskunft darüber geben.

War die Möglichkeit ein zertifiziertes Green Meeting abzuhalten ein Entscheidungskriterium für das Congress Centrum Alpbach?

Nein. Weil es sowieso der Plan war die Konferenz so grün wie möglich zu machen, auch wenn das vom Konferenzzentrum nicht angeboten worden wäre. Es war natürlich ein super Vorteil weil das Congress Centrum Alpbach bereits sehr viele Punkte im Kriterienkatalog von selbst erfüllt. Hauptsächlich ist es darum gegangen das Thema der Konferenz glaubwürdig zu vermitteln. Man kann nicht eine Konferenz bei der es um Wald und Gesellschaft und die Verbindung zwischen Mensch und Wald und all den Produkten des Waldes geht, einfach in Wien oder mitten in der Stadt machen. Zusätzlich war das Exkursionsprogramm so geplant, dass man Wald, Weide, Almwirtschaft, und Umweltbildung vermittelt somit war Tirol der passende Ort.

Das war der hauptsächliche Grund für das Kongresszentrum und weil wir auch wussten, dass das dort sehr gut organisiert ist.

Wieso ist es wichtig für Ihr Institut ein Green Meeting zu machen?

Wie auch oben schon genannt das Profil der Forschungseinrichtung, aktiv CO2 einsparen, und auch dass jeder das Gefühl hat dadurch einen Beitrag zu Umweltschutz und Nachhaltigkeit leisten.

Welche Rolle spielt Nachhaltigkeit an Ihrem Institut?

Da Nachhaltigkeit sowohl im Lehrauftrag als auch im Denken und Handeln der Mitarbeiter verankert ist, hat es einen sehr hohen Stellenwert. Auch für die BOKU generell, die BOKU ist EMAS zertifiziert. Das Thema ist überall präsent: alle Lehrveranstaltungen, viele Forschungseinrichtungen, und Publikationen beschäftigen sich mit Themen wie z.B. Klimawandel, Raumplanung, Landschaftsplanung bei denen Nachhaltigkeit immer wieder vorkommt.

Gab es Schwierigkeiten im Zertifizierungsprozess?

In unserem kann ich ganz klar sagen, nein.

Sind Ihnen Schwachstellen aufgefallen, die vielleicht bei anderen Organisatoren auftreten könnten?

Bei unserer Konferenz war das zwar nicht der Fall, aber es gibt Konferenzen die Aussteller dabei haben und da gibt es z.B. Kriterien, dass Aussteller auf unnötige Geschenke, Broschüren etc. verzichten sollen soweit das möglich ist oder zertifizierte Druckereien beauftragen müssen bzw. chlorfrei gebleichtes Papier verwenden dürfen. Da kann ich mir vorstellen, dass das schwierig wird in der Kommunikation. Das ist schwierig bei Ausstellern weil die wollen ihr Unternehmen bewerben und somit Geschenke und Werbematerialien verteilen. Das wäre dann aber eigentlich keine Schwachstelle vom Zertifizierungsprozess sondern von den Organisatoren, wenn die das nicht ausreichend kommunizieren können. Bei vielen Konferenzen werden die Vorträge oder Abstracts gedruckt, auch da ist es sicher nicht immer

leicht, den Teilnehmern zu vermitteln, warum darauf verzichtet werden soll. Wir haben uns dazu entschieden, alle Abstracts auf einem USB-Stick zu speichern und diesen an alle Teilnehmer zu verteilen.

Was sind die Stärken?

Dass man nicht sich selbst überlassen ist. Man hat einen Ansprechpartner im Kongresszentrum der sich auskennt und dem du Fragen stellen kannst. Zum Beispiel was könnten wir dort noch machen, was könnten wir in dem Bereich noch machen um die Kriterien zu erfüllen, oder wir können die und die Kriterien nicht erfüllen ist das ein Problem? Das war einfach irrsinnig hilfreich. Wenn man auf sich alleingestellt ist fallen einem viele Sachen einfach nicht ein und die Ansprechpersonen weisen einen dann auf Dinge hin die man noch machen könnte. Von selber kommt man auf manche Ideen nicht, wenn man sich nicht so oft damit auseinandersetzt. Für mich war das die erste Green Meeting Veranstaltung die ich organisiert habe. Jetzt hatte man da nicht so viel Erfahrung. Natürlich wenn man das schon öfters gemacht hat dann weiß man diese Dinge eh schon aber für mich als Neuling war das sehr hilfreich eine Ansprechperson zu haben. Es erspart auch viel organisatorischen Aufwand (Anm. Frau Mag. Moser war Ansprechperson).

Wie schätzen Sie allgemein die Auswirkungen von Meetings auf die Umwelt ein?

Wenn Konferenzen im Ausland sind bzw. bei internationale Konferenzen muss ein Großteil der Leute mit dem Flugzeug anreisen. Dieser Situation sind wir uns alle hier bewusst weil wir haben ja viele Mitarbeiter die zu Konferenzen oder zu anderen Meetings fliegen müssen. Ob sich das wirklich umgehen ließe durch Telefonkonferenzen ist sehr fraglich weil der internationale Austausch und das „Netzwerken“ in der Forschung ein sehr wesentlicher Bereich ist. Ich bezweifle, dass man den weglassen kann. Es wird zwar versucht teilweise im nahen Umfeld mit dem Zug zu fahren oder es werden Fahrgemeinschaften gebildet, aber zu solchen Konferenzen kommt man fast nur mit dem Flugzeug. Und das hat mit Sicherheit eine sehr negative Auswirkung auf die Umwelt aber ich weiß nicht ob sich das wirklich vermeiden lässt. Gerade beim Congress Centrum Alpbach ist das ein Thema weil man öffentlich nur schwer hinkommt.

Welchen Beitrag leistet die Zertifizierung um negative Umwelteinwirkungen zu verringern?

Ich kenne dazu keine konkreten Zahlen nennen aber ich glaube schon, dass es ein nicht unwesentlicher Beitrag ist. Andere Veranstaltungen z.B. Messen verursachen Müll der eigentlich nicht notwendig ist wie Plastikbecher, Plastikbesteck, unnötige Geschenke und Papier. Wenn man das sieht dann glaub ich schon, dass Green Meetings da einen wesentlichen Beitrag leisten können. Was mir gut gefallen hat ist der effiziente Ressourceneinsatz. In Alpbach gibt es verschiedene Bereiche. Es gibt Mehrweggeschirr, kein Plastik, keine Plastikflaschen, bis auf die Servietten konnte alles wiederverwendet werden. Es gab auch Energiesparlampen. Wenn ein Raum nicht gebraucht wurde war dort auch keine Beleuchtung. Architektonisch ist das Gebäude, obwohl es in den Boden hineingebaut ist, energieeffizient. Es wurde so geplant und gebaut, dass möglichst viel Tageslicht hineinkommt. In den Seminarräumen brauchte man dann trotzdem Beleuchtung aber im Plenarsaal kaum und oben im Empfangsfoyer auch nicht. Ebenso gab es keine Papierverschwendung aufgrund von Auflagen, dass man nicht alles ausdrucken darf. Wir haben unser Book of Abstracts nicht ausgedruckt sondern auf USB verteilt und keine unnötigen Geschenke vergeben. Broschüren und Informationsmaterialien wurden nur auf Anfrage verteilt.

Ein weiterer Punkt ist die Verwendung von Fair Trade und regionalen Produkten. Das hat sich wirklich durch die gesamte Veranstaltung gezogen. Auch das Catering beim Dinner und die Unterkünfte haben sich die Green Meeting Kriterien gehalten. Es fördert dadurch auch die regionale Wirtschaft weil der Caterer regionale Produkte kauft. Es gab dann regionale Säfte und wenn es Orangensaft gab, dann war es Fair Trade. Der Wein kam aus der Region. Man hat das richtig gemerkt, dass die Produkte aus der Region waren, bis auf die Bananen, es gab Traubensaft oder Birnensaft, auch beim Fleisch hat man es gemerkt. Es gab regionale Spezialitäten und das hat sehr gut zur Atmosphäre gepasst.

Gab es auch Dinge bei denen der Effekt gering war?

Was ich in Bezug auf Alpbach nennen würde ist die Anreise wobei da Alpbach natürlich nichts dafür kann, dass es so abgelegen liegt und mit öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln nur schwer erreichbar. Es wurde uns geholfen die Anreise so gut wie möglich mit Shuttlebussen vom Flughafen München zu erleichtern aber das war auch doch schwierig weil jeder zu einer anderen Zeit anreist und das im Vorfeld geplant werden muss. Trotzdem haben wir das ganz gut hinbekommen und ein Viertel der Teilnehmer haben das Shuttle in Anspruch genommen. Es sind auch nicht so viele mit dem Auto angereist. Diesbezüglich kann man sicher noch etwas verbessern. Das ist aber auch im Prinzip das einzige was mir in Bezug auf Alpbach einfällt als negative Umweltauswirkung. Das ist eine die aber fast nicht zu vermeiden ist. Es ist unmöglich zu sagen dass alle möglichst ressourcenschonend und klimafreundlich anreisen können. Vor Ort geht es wieder weil man alles zu Fuß gehen kann jedes Hotel zu Fuß erreichen kann. Bei den Exkursionen sind wir alle zusammen im Bus gefahren und haben auch keine zusätzlichen Autos gebraucht.

Wie bewerten Sie das Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Green Meetings?

Ich finde es gut, dass es das gibt und ich finde man kann ruhig ein bisschen mehr darauf hinweisen. Gerade in Bezug auf die Messe hat es mich gewundert, dass das viele gar nicht kennen. Wenn man als Seminarhotel ein bisschen auf die Umwelt schaut, da gibt es ja mittlerweile sehr viele, dass da viele das Umweltzeichen gar nicht kennen ist fast ein bisschen bedenklich. Es gibt es auch schon seit langer Zeit im Tourismusbereich das ist bedenklich.

7.3.2. Interview 2: Facility manager, Georg Hechenblaikner, MBA

Sie haben vor drei Jahren begonnen das Angebot des Congress Centrums Alpbach in Richtung Nachhaltigkeit zu optimieren. Was waren die ausschlaggebenden Gründe Lizenznehmer zu werden?

Das eine hat mit dem anderen nicht direkt etwas zu tun. Die Weichen, das Kongresszentrum in Richtung Nachhaltigkeit auszurichten, sind eigentlich schon mit dem Neubau 1999 gestellt worden, indem man das Gebäude in einen Hang hineingestellt, begrünt und die Energieeffizienz auf den damals aktuellsten Stand gebracht hat. Das war die Grundrichtung die eingeschlagen wurde und anschließend wurde das Gesamtangebot auf das Thema Green Meeting ausgerichtet, da um 2005 und 2006 die ersten Anzeichen spürbar waren, dass markt- und kundenseitig Interesse für nachhaltige Tagungsangebote besteht. Nachdem wir uns mit Experten unterhalten haben und immer wieder das Feedback bekommen haben, wenn Green Meeting, dann ist Alpbach ideal dafür. So gesehen wurde die Grundentscheidung 2008 getroffen bei der wir alle Bereiche unseres Angebotes in Richtung Green Meeting optimieren wollten. Ein Schritt davon war, dass wir uns Green Globe zertifizieren lassen und, dass wir Lizenznehmer für das Österreichische Umweltzeichen werden, wobei das ja erst 2010 zum ersten Mal möglich war.

Die ganzen Bemühungen Richtung Nachhaltigkeit waren unabhängig von der Zertifizierung?

Uns ist in den ersten Schritten aufgefallen, dass wir sobald wir das Green Meeting Angebot marktfähig gemacht haben immer wieder kundenseitig die Frage gestellt bekommen haben wie das überprüft wird. Daraufhin haben wir beschlossen, dass eine externe Überprüfung in Form einer Zertifizierung hier sicher hilfreich ist. Wir haben bewusst zwei Zertifizierungen gewählt: Green Globe weil da sehr stark das Gebäude, mit internationalen Kriterien, mit Vororts Terminen, einem Audit und dementsprechend auch viel Datenanalysen, evaluiert und überprüft wird. Die zweite Zertifizierung das Österreichische Umweltzeichen hat hier natürlich einer Parallele aber geht gleichzeitig in Richtung Veranstaltung selbst. Dadurch wird auch zweite Seite der Medaille abgedeckt, nicht nur das Gebäude sondern auch die Veranstaltung und deren Inhalte.

Um kurz auf die erste Frage zurückzukommen, was waren die ursprünglichen Beweggründe überhaupt ein nachhaltiges Kongressgebäude zu errichten?

Wenn man Alpbach kennt dann weiß man, dass man hier in dem Ort schon immer sehr darauf bedacht war, dass generationenübergreifend Projekte entwickelt werden. Ein Beispiel dazu ist der Alpbacher Baustil der bereits schon in den 50er Jahren in der Alpbacher Bauordnung verankert wurde. Konkret 1953 hat der damalige Bürgermeister auch für Folgegenerationen festgeschrieben, dass nur Häuser im Alpbacher Baustil errichtet werden dürfen und dementsprechend wurden keine anderen Bauwerke zugelassen. Dadurch ist Alpbach eine einzigartige Bergdestination geworden und die Bausünden, die in vielen Tiroler Dörfern durch touristischen Aufschwung Großteils entstanden sind, wurden vermieden. Dadurch hat man natürlich heute ein USP das natürlich auch in der Touristik sehr stark weiterhilft. In konsequenter Verfolgung dieses Weges hat man bei der Entscheidung, das Gebäude neuzubauen und nicht nur zu renovieren, den Architekten von DINA4 den Zuschlag gegeben weil es einfach ideal gepasst hat. Bei der riesigen Kubatur, da Gebäude ist ja sehr groß, wenn man das im Alpbacher Baustil mit Holz errichtet hätte, wäre das für das ganze Dorfzentrum ein zu dominantes Gebäude geworden. Das Verstecken in den Hang hinein war dann eine intelligente Lösung, da man möglichst viel von der Kubatur von außen nicht sieht, aber sich gleichzeitig auch traut ein modernes Gebäude zu errichten. Was damit einherging waren die sehr guten Dämmwerte die zum Beispiel ein Gründach mit sich bringt was natürlich sehr stark in Richtung Energieeffizienz spricht.

Welchen Nutzen haben Sie sich durch die Zertifizierung mit dem Österreichischen Umweltzeichen versprochen?

Der Nutzen der Zertifizierung ist letztendlich, dass wir extern überprüft werden und dementsprechend auch selbst immer wieder Handlungsempfehlungen bekommen, in welchen Bereichen wir weiter optimieren sollen und müssen. Wir wollen nicht nur die Pflichtkriterien erfüllen sondern auch darüber hinauskommen wodurch wir auch ein gutes Benchmarking Tool haben. Gleichzeitig ist natürlich diese Zertifizierung von Nutzen, da sie den Kunden gegenüber Glaubwürdigkeit vermittelt.

Wie beurteilen Sie das Interesse für zertifizierte Green Meetings?

Also die Zertifizierung ist für uns insofern wichtig, um in der Kommunikation darauf hinweisen zu können. Ich würde es so herunterbrechen: nachdem es sich hier um das Österreichische Umweltzeichen handelt, hat es natürlich Relevanz bei österreichischen Kunden. Man muss bedenken, dass wir knapp 40% unseres Umsatzes mit Kunden außerhalb von Österreich machen, also mehr als 50% unseres Umsatzes mit Kunden aus Österreich. Das heißt, dass das Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Kunden außerhalb Österreichs nur von bedingter Relevanz ist, weil es im eigenen Land oder für die eigenen Teilnehmer nicht unbedingt relevant ist. Aber nichtsdestotrotz ist es für österreichische Veranstalter, wie das Europäische Forum Alpbach und Teilnehmer aus Österreich, das Umweltzeichen ein Markenbegriff. Das ist natürlich von Vorteil für die interne Kommunikation, da man sagen kann 'liebe Teilnehmer, liebe Stakeholder wir haben unser Projekt aufgrund der Richtlinien des Umweltzeichens ausgerichtet'. Dadurch hebt man sich sehr stark ab von der Masse an sonstigen Veranstaltungen ab und das erzeugt Nachfrage. Dadurch haben wir auch eigentlich immer wieder Kunden die sich dafür motivieren lassen. Manche vielleicht nicht im ersten Schritt aber das Interesse ist groß, das im Jahr 2012 bereits mehr als die Hälfte aller Teilnehmer die heuer bei uns aus- und eingegangen sind, bei einer zertifizierten Veranstaltung waren.

Kommen die Kunden eher von sich aus auf die Idee sich zertifizieren zu lassen, oder leisten Sie hier mehr Überzeugungsarbeit?

Ich würde sagen Großteils geht das von uns aus. Es ist schon so, dass Kunden Alpbach als Destination wählen wegen dem Gesamtangebot an Kongresszentrum, Übernachtungsbetriebe, Besonderheit und USP des Bergdorfes, Anreisemöglichkeiten und Alpbachs Ruf als internationale Kongress- und Tagungsdestination. Das Tüpfelchen auf dem I und vielleicht auch letztes Entscheidungskriterium ist, dass man ein sehr stimmiges auf Nachhaltigkeit ausgerichtetes Tagungsangebot vorfindet. Das ist vielleicht die Grundeinstellung wieso man nach Alpbach kommt. Dass man sich dann noch die Veranstaltung zertifizieren lässt, dazu braucht es dann von uns einen ersten Schritt, indem wir

unsere Kunden Aktiv informieren und ihnen auch ein wenig die Angst nehmen, dass es ein überbordender bürokratischer Aufwand ist. Es ist ja in der Tat so, dass wir sehr viele Inhalte bei den Zertifizierungen schon vorweggenommen haben, also Dinge die wir ohnehin schon organisiert haben die es dem Kunden erleichtern. Wir weisen dann sehr konkret daraufhin was vom Kunden kommen muss und dann überlegen sich das die Kunden gut, wie viel der Aufwand ist, wie viele Stunden dafür benötigt werden und welchen Nutzen sie von einem zertifizierten Green Meeting ziehen. Zum Beispiel kann das dem Veranstalter für Innenmarketing und Sponsoring weiterhelfen. Da können mit wir immer wieder Kunden überzeugen. Großteils kommt der erste Schritt von uns.

Welche Rolle spielen hier Kosten? Ist ein Green Meeting teurer als ein normales?

Nein ist es nicht. Ich finde das Argument das manche vorschreiben nicht treffend. Natürlich muss man die erhöhten Personalkosten, aufgrund des höheren Organisationsaufwandes der die Projektleitung betrifft, bewerten aber es ist im Gesamtumfang was eine Veranstaltung kostet oder an Organisationsaufwand bedeutet, im überbeschaubaren Bereich. Der Nutzen ist dafür ungleich höher. Beschaffungskosten sind davon auch betroffen. Wenn man zum Beispiel eine spezielle Papierform hernimmt wie mit dem Umweltzeichen zertifiziertes Papier, dann kann das sein, dass das 2-3% vom Einkauf ausmachen, aber das sind letztlich nicht die ganz großen Budgets. Da geht es dann um eine Willensentscheidung. Und auch beim Catering ist es das Gleiche. Natürlich sind regional verfügbare, hochwertige Produkte tendenziell etwas teurer und schwieriger in der Beschaffung als Convenienceprodukte die in großen Fabriken erzeugt werden, aber auch da wollen wir auf Qualität setzen und daher ist das eingepreist. Mit der Ausrichtung unseres Angebots auf Green Meetings mussten wir nicht unsere Preise plötzlich drastisch erhöhen.

Können Sie erläutern aus welchen Gründen Kunden sich für eine Zertifizierung entscheiden?

Ja, die Gründe sind wie ich zuerst erwähnt habe einerseits die persönliche Überzeugung des Veranstalters, dass man Nachhaltigkeit als Gesamtkonzept für die Tagungsbranche als sehr wichtig identifiziert und sich dadurch auch in dem Bereich engagiert. Der zweite Grund, der auch immer wieder vorhanden ist, ist Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Innenmarketing, und Positionierung als Veranstaltung wodurch man sich von anderen abhebt. Grundsätzlich ist das Feedback das jeder Veranstalter von den Teilnehmenden bekommt immer sehr gut. Wenn man dadurch von den eigenen Teilnehmern motiviert wird, dass man etwas Gutes tut, dann ist das für den Veranstalter natürlich auch ein Grund warum man in dem Bereich weiter macht. Das sind also zwei Dinge die ich vorrangig sehen würde.

Es gibt vielleicht dann mittelfristig auch Firmen oder Institutionen die das in ihrer Beschaffung vielleicht auch verpflichtend voraussetzen. Momentan ist es nicht der Fall aber es könnte z.B. durch einen Ministeriumserlass dazu kommen, dass österreichische Ministerien nur noch nach Green Meeting Richtlinien einkaufen dürfen. Dann wäre das natürlich auch ein Argument aber das ist im Moment noch nicht spruchreif. Oder das Firmen die ein CSR-reporting haben, sagen gut wir positionieren uns am Markt als nachhaltiger Konzern daher kaufen wir auch beim Tagungsangebot Produkte oder Angebote ein die Green Meeting Inhalte liefern können. Das wäre jetzt zukünftig. Im Moment ist es eher so, dass Teilnehmerfeedback und auch die Positionierung des Veranstalters Gründe für eine Zertifizierung sind.

Welche Aspekte werden von den Teilnehmern besonders wahrgenommen und welche weniger?

Es ist so, dass wir die Teilnehmer aktiv informieren müssen bzw. dass der Veranstalter seine Teilnehmer aktiv für die Prozesse informieren muss. Es hat zum Beispiel kein Teilnehmer die Möglichkeit sich anzuschauen wie das Congress Centrum Alpbach beheizt wird und wie viel Energieaufwand grundsätzlich benötigt wird, um diese große Räumlichkeit auf Betriebstemperatur zu bringen. Wenn darüber die Kunden, sprich unsere Veranstalter, die Teilnehmer aktiv informieren dann ist es schon immer etwas Bemerkenswertes. Man kann das ja umlegen weil jeder weiß was er zu Hause für sein Einfamilienhaus an Heizkosten hat und wenn dann das Congress Centrum Alpbach nur das vier oder fünffache vom Einfamilienhaus an

Heizkosten, bei dieser riesigen Cubatur braucht, dann ist es für jeden verständlich, dass hier etwas Besonders entstanden ist. Ich nenne jetzt nur ein Beispiel.

Über gewisse technische Abläufe muss man aktiv informieren und da ist es bei der Zertifizierung wichtig, dass man uns das glaubt. Auch wir werden überprüft und müssen immer alle Dokumente offenlegen. Gleiches gilt für den Bezug von Ökostrom. Wir werden durch Tiroler Wasserkraft mit 100% Ökostrom versorgt und auch hier gibt es Zertifikate. Der Strom schaut nicht anders aus und die Geräte funktionieren gleich wie vorher und man muss uns das dann auch einfach glauben, wenn wir dementsprechend auch darüber sprechen oder das auch aushängen.

Für den Teilnehmer wird es besonders spürbar bei der Gastronomie, bei den Kaffeepausen, Mittagessen, Abendveranstaltungen. Das ist auffällig wenn die Zusammenarbeit mit dem Catering so konkret ist, dass der Cateringpartner auch bei der Buffetbeschilderung ganz besonders auf die Inhalte und Kriterien die wir mit Green Meeting Alpbach verfolgen hinweist. Er beschreibt z.B. woher das Fleisch kommt und welche Gemüsesorten verarbeitet werden. Da geht es immer um den Gedanken Regionalität und Saisonalität. Wenn beides nicht verfügbar ist, dann ist es zumindest Fair Trade als letzter Anker. Orangensaft werden wir hier in unserer Region nicht anbauen können und ist doch etwas was vom Kunden immer wieder gewünscht wird weil nur Apfelsaft ist manchen wieder zu wenig. Auch bei Kaffee wählt man dann den Weg und bezieht in diesem Bereich dann Fair Trade Produkte. Das muss aber Ausgeschildert werden sonst kommt das beim Teilnehmer an. Aber auch hier kommt sofort die kritische Hinterfragung. Unsere Kunden finden dann z.B. bei den Kaffeepausen einen Obstkorb und da sind dann Bananen drinnen und da klebt natürlich das Fair Trade Label drauf aber trotz allem ist das für manche Teilnehmer dann schon zu viel. Lieber verzichten die dann auf Bananen als Fair Trade Bananen. Wobei das kann man jetzt auch nicht über einen Kamm scheren und wir versuchen einen guten Mittelweg zu wählen. Also es wäre Fatal wenn wir jetzt im Winter Erdbeeren hätten und die Fair Trade aus Israel kommen, dann hätten wir unsere Vorbehalte und sagen dann lieber nicht. Aber gewisse Produkte müssen trotzdem angeboten werden, und da sieht man dass der einzelne Teilnehmer bei den Lebensmitteln das unglaublich kritisch hinterfragt, es wie auch in den Fragebögen ersichtlich ist. Dementsprechend wissen wir, dass der Veranstalter und auch unsere Cateringpartner sehr gewissenhaft vorgehen müssen.

Ein zweites Thema, dass der Teilnehmer spürt weil das für ihn relevant ist, ist die Anreise. Wir informieren mit dem Veranstalter im Vorfeld aktiv darüber, dass Alpbach mit öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln sehr gut erreichbar ist. Wir haben die Schnellzuganschlüsse, wir haben einen kostenlosen Regiobus der vom Bahnhof Brixlegg die gesamte Region mit einem Bustakt versorgt- Wenn man vor Ort in Alpbach ist und man im Dorf übernachtet braucht man ohnehin kein Fahrzeug. Man kommt also mit öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln gut ins Dorf und das ist natürlich im Sinne der CO2 Optimierung ein ganz wesentliche Faktor. Darauf weisen wir auch hin und viele unserer Veranstaltungsteilnehmer lassen sich dafür dann auch gewinnen.

Wir haben das Thema vorher schon angeschnitten, wie beurteilen Sie den Prozess der Zertifizierung aus Sicht der Kunden? Wo gibt es Stärken, wo Schwächen?

Aus Sicht der Kunden kann ich nur feststellen, dass es für alle jene die das ernsthaft wollen, keine Schwierigkeiten gibt. Es sind also keine Hürden die absolut unschaffbar wären, da geht es immer ums wollen und nicht ums können. Das österreichische Umweltzeichen wurde ja so konzipiert, dass man Partner gewinnen und einladen will einen Weg mit zu bestreiten und nicht, dass er zuerst mal alles ablehnt. Hier werden mehr Gemeinsamkeiten gesucht und Chancen eröffnet. Nachdem wir hier schon sehr viel auch aufbereitet haben, wird das Angebot für den Kunden auf dem Silbertablett serviert. Natürlich muss der Kunde die Bestellung so aufgeben, dass es Green Meeting konform ist. Wenn z.B. unser Cateringpartner ein Angebot für ein nach Green Meeting Kriterien erstelltes Menü ermittelt und dann aber der Kunde sagt er möchte trotzdem ein asiatisches Fischbuffet dann wird es natürlich nicht mit der Zertifizierung übereinstimmen. Wenn er sagt ich nehme das was mir die Cateringpartner anbieten, dann hat man erstens hochwertige Produkte und zweites ist es auch Green Meeting konform. Das gleiche gilt auch für das Thema Anreiselogistik. Da gibt es gewisse Dinge die aufbereitet sind die man übernehmen kann. Natürlich ist es dann oft von Vorteil wenn der Veranstalter ein gewisses Budget hat und zum Beispiel den international Teilnehmern die nach München fliegen die Anreise zu erleichtern, indem man dort einen Shuttlebus hinstellt und dann 40 Teilnehmer gemeinsam mit einem Bus nach Alpbach fährt bevor sich sonst jeder selber sein Flughafentaxi selber buchen muss. Da lässt sich manches dann wirklich verbessern, optimieren, und zusammenfassen. Das ist halt ein bisschen ein

Organisationsaufwand. So gesehen gibt es da eigentlich keine extremen Hürden. Wenn ich ein weiteres Beispiel heranziehen darf, ich nehme jetzt an mein Kunde will Werbegeschenke und dergleichen verteilen, dann sollten diese vermieden werden oder Dinge sein die im Sinne der Kriterien auch stimmig sind. Es sind also immer Willensentscheidungen und keine Könnensentscheidungen daher sind die Schwierigkeiten meistens persönlicher Natur. Natürlich ist die Suche nach dem richtigen Anbieter um meine Beschaffung zu optimieren ein bisschen aufwendiger, allerdings ist das bei den kleinen Kongressen meistens überschaubar. Bei dem Europäischen Forum als großen Kongress ist musste sehr viel umgestellt werden weil die kommen mit sehr viel Technik zu uns ins Haus. Nehmen ihre eigenen Geräte mit, eigene PCs, eigene Drucker und klarenweise ist es hier wichtig gewesen, dass sie bei den Geräten die sie hier aufbauen, die Netzwerke, die dann im Sinne von Green IT sind und Geräte mit geringen Energieverbrauch einsetzen. Aber das lässt sich alles identifizieren da es ja genug Angebote am Markt gibt und dann kann man das auch tun.

Die Stärken sehen ich darin dass es einheitlich ist, dass es von uns administriert und vorgegeben wird, dass unsere Projektleiter sehr gut in dieser Materie geschult sind und den Kunden wirklich weiterhelfen können und an die Hand nehmen können und das wir sehr viel schon aufbereitet haben.

Welchen Beitrag leistet ihrer Meinung nach die Zertifizierung um negative Umwelteinwirkungen zu verringern?

Ich muss jetzt offen sagen, dass wir uns natürlich bewusst sind, dass die Bemühungen von Alpbach nicht die Welt retten werden. Das wissen wir grundsätzlich schon aber wir haben eine ganz besondere Stärke und das ist der Multiplikatoren-Effekt. 14.000 unterschiedliche Personen gehen bei uns pro Jahr aus und ein, wovon mehr als die Hälfte mit dem Green Meeting Gedanken konfrontiert werden. Das sind dann 7.000 Entscheidungsträger die irgendwo in der Welt dann wieder mit dem Gedanken selber etwas beeinflussen können. Das ist die eine Seite. Das andere ist ganz konkret wir stärken die regionale Wirtschaft, wir minimieren den Transport, reduzieren CO2 und zwar so stark, dass man auf unserer Homepage als Veranstalter mit dem Atmosfair Rechner die CO2 Emissionen meiner Veranstaltung

sehr genau errechnen kann. Wenn ich mit dieser Teilnehmergröße und den Teilnehmern aus diesen und jenen Ländern und dieser Veranstaltungsdauer nach Alpbach komme dann löse ich damit so und soviel an CO2 Emissionen aus. Und man könnte das jetzt auch mit einem weiteren Mausklick kompensieren weil man gleichzeitig auch sieht, das man das was man hier auslöst an CO2. Aufgrund der Optimierung, Ich nenne jetzt zwei Beispiele eines ist 100% Ökostrom das zweite ist die Heizung mit erneuerbare Energie und 100% Pellets, hat man in dem Bereich ein Nullemmission und damit auch einen großen Vorteil im Vergleich zu allen anderen Anbietern die auf das nicht zurückgreifen können. Aber natürlich ist mir bewusst, dass es hier in Anbetracht des Themas CO2 nur um kleine Schritte geht weil sobald sich ein Teilnehmer in den Flieger setzt und von Australien nach München fliegt, dann er wird das ungleich mehrfache an CO2 Emissionen auslösen als es der Fall wäre wenn er nicht fliegt. Aber gleichzeitig stellen wir uns dann im Umkehrschluss die Frage aber wir können natürlich dann nicht sagen wir nehmen keine Teilnehmer die fliegen müssen. Das wäre dann ein Ast den man sich selber absägt. Aber in den Bereichen wo wir ansetzen können, versuchen wir zu optimieren. Wir sagen nicht der Teilnehmer muss sich jetzt auf Schiff begeben und dann fünf Wochen mit dem Schiff herumfahren, da sind wir nicht die Besserwisser. Wo wir optimieren können, das sind spürbare nachrechenbare aber auch umsetzbare Projekte, Projektbestandteile, die immer einen größeren Ausdehnungskreis bekommen, da wir ja vom Congress Centrum ausgehend immer mehr Partner von Alpbach einbeziehen in das Projekt.