

Abstract

Climate change plays a central role in today's literature and media. The long-term trend becomes increasingly recognizable by the public, where the flora and fauna are experiencing the change at first hand. The alpine tourism destinations are suffering on the changes, as they being highly sensitive to minor changes in temperature. This thesis examined which impacts, global warming and climate change, have on the tourism and hospitality industry in the Alps, looking at the tourism destination Zell am See-Kaprun. Climate and weather are intrinsic components for the tourism product of Zell am See-Kaprun, and a vital pull factor to travel to a destination as such. Therefore, the destination management organization (DMO) and hoteliers were approached, to gather information, to what extent they perceive climate change as relevant, and if, what adaptation and mitigation strategies are implemented to combat against the effects and causes. Furthermore, what the long-term strategies for the destination are, taking into consideration changing temperatures, climatic extremes, and climate variability.

A qualitative research approach was applied, where in-depth interviews were conducted with the DMO and five hoteliers of the destination. The hoteliers were selected according to availability and star category. It was assumed that hotels who operate in a higher star category are more likely to adapt quicker to trends as such. The interviews were conducted in spring 2019 and the data analysis was completed via analyzing the transcripts according to main patterns. The results revealed a controversy between participants. Some participants mentioned, that climate change is still in its infancy and not relevant in today's business context. There are trends, such as scarcity on skilled workforce, which are more important to the hoteliers at this point in time. Other participants mentioned, that climate change will affect the next two to three generations and becomes an important theme in the future. Moreover, participants perceive climate change as a competitive advantage for the region of Zell am See-Kaprun, over southern tourism destinations. They theorize that an increase in temperature will lead to unenjoyable summer tourism destinations in southern countries, as these destinations are predicted to become too hot.