

# Transforming and Managing Destinations

## Tourism and Leisure in a Time of Global Change and Risks



**Andreas Kagermeier & Jarkko Saarinen (Hrsg.)**

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# **Studien zur Freizeit- und Tourismusforschung**

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Andreas Kagermeier & Jarkko Saarinen (Hrsg.)

# **Transforming and Managing Destinations** **Tourism and Leisure in a Time of Global Change** **and Risks**

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# **Environmental management and sustainability in the hospitality business: the case of the Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah Agadir, Southwest Morocco**

*Youssef El Boudribili (Agadir), Bel Kabbachi (Agadir) & Andreas Kagermeier (Trier)*

Keywords: sustainable development, tourism, environmental management

## **Summary**

In a fierce economic environment aimed at attracting the maximum number of tourists, these customers sought after have become more and more demanding in terms of quality and price. With the evolution of the needs and the behaviours of these customers, otherwise heterogeneous, the environment took an important place in the criteria of choice of the destination. Because of this fact, the adoption of environmental management becomes a major variable of competitiveness, imposing on some tourist establishments in Morocco a readjustment that may prove to be expensive if an acceptable level of sustainability is to be achieved.

The chosen case to carry out this study is a tourist entity established in a rural area pertaining to the reserve of one of the Argan Biosphere. This entity is a structure allegedly authentic in its architecture, its style of furnishings and its culinary art, all inspired from the local tradition. Offering a limited lodging capacity, this entity named Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah conceived and directed its services toward an ecological tourism being demanded by some markets of Europe and North America. It has already received several awards for sustainable tourism, notably the "Green Key". It has also been awarded the certificate of responsible tourism by the Canadian agency "Ecoplanet". The Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah practices an environmental management based on saving energy and water, eco-management of wastes, recycling of used water, permaculture with a biological vegetable garden, landscape integration as well as environmental awareness.

In order to shed some light on the contribution of the environmental management to the success of tourism sustainability in this Ecolodge entity, two opposing hypotheses were analysed, namely:

- i) the institution of the environmental management is expensive in terms of investment and has only a minor impact in marketing this kind of service;
- ii) the environmental Management is a short path to achieve sustainability in tourism, especially in terms of sustainable methods of production and consumption.

## 1 Introduction

With the evolution of the needs and the behaviors of the tourist clientele, the notion of the environment took a very important place in the criteria of choice of the destination. Thus, some tourist enterprises are making more and more an effort to provide a quality service while adopting an environmental management system. This system is seen as a continuous process of improvement, sensitising and promotion of the techniques of conservation of resources and good practices aiming at the preservation of the environment.

The institution of the environmental management proves to be at times expensive for a tourist and for the leader of the tourist establishment to better market the value of services and to reach an acceptable level of sustainability. It is in this context that this study was undertaken for purposes of evaluating a tourist establishment in its style of environmental management in order to estimate its resulting value both physically and morally.

The atlas Ecolodge Kasbah is part of the territory of a rural commune called Drarga located some 5 kms from Agadir (cf. fig. 1) at the heart of the Argan Biosphere Reserve classified by UNESCO. The establishment has also been classified by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism as a first category of rural shelters.

The site is open all year around except for

July and it is accessible by both private and public transportation. It enjoys an area of more than 1 hectare and a capacity of 26 beds. The Ecolodge offers its customers a restaurant, nine standard rooms and 3 suites well equipped in a setting reflecting the native Amazigh culture.

The services offered by the Ecolodge include also a variety of sporting activities. A plethora of choices are offered to customers such as all surface vehicles, tracking, hiking, horse or mule back riding. All these choices provide an easy way to discover and enjoy the scenery and the landscape surrounding the site.

## 2 The Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah environmental diagnosis

### 2.1 Value of service

Atlas Kasbah managed to secure a positive report in terms of good quality/price. This conclusion is based on the assessment of its services in four interrelated variables:

*Fig. 2: Localisation of the Ecolodge in the Argan forest*



*Photo: Ecolodge Kasbah*

### 2.1.1 Tranquility and beauty.

Located at the centre of the Argan Biosphere Reserve at the foot of the Atlas Mountains on the border of a valley system crossing geological layers dating back to the secondary geological period, the Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah is blessed with a remarkable beauty and serene scenery. The immediate vicinity of Atlas Kasbah doesn't lack a charm either, it boasts:

- a botanical garden,
- a phyto-purification system (cf. fig. 4),
- a pottery shop;
- traditional hives;
- terrace cultivation and argan trees;
- a sheepfold-hen house.

The rooms give on a pleasant view: customers can enjoy views of the swimming pool, the High-Atlas mountains, the plain of the Souss and the city of Agadir.

Farther, the tourist can discover the historic vestiges dating more than a thousand years. The Artesian sources often surrounded with travertine in the shape of underground cave can also be enjoyed in the vicinity.

### 2.1.2 Security, cleanliness and comfort

Atlas Kasbah procures a lodging of quality in its totality. Its rooms are mid size and are endowed with good quality bedding and that are all clean and equipped with hot water. It also possesses a botanical garden with an electrolysis swimming pool and its restaurant serves a clean, traditional and varied bio-food.

### 2.1.3 Human resources

The staff at Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah is pleasant, presentable, welcoming and offer an efficient service. They speak several languages (Arabic, Amazigh, French, German and English).

*Fig. 3: Architecture and inside view*



*Photo: Ecolodge Kasbah*

*Fig. 4: Phyto-purification as part of the waste water management*



*Photo: El Boudribili*

### **2.1.4 Discovery of nature and local culture**

The Ecolodge puts at the disposal of its customers several tools facilitating the discovery of the nature and the local culture:

- Booklets of welcome;
- Notice board;
- Advice;
- Web site/Facebook page.

## **2.2 Environmental management**

The Ecolodge practices an environmental management, susceptible to reduce environmental impact and to preserve nature.

Since its inauguration in May 2009, it has been awarded several citations for sustainable tourism, notably, the price for responsible tourism granted by the Moroccan Ministry of the Tourism, the ecolabel “Green Key” as well as the certificate of the responsible tourism offered by the Canadian agency “Ecoplannet“. This project is also engaged in efforts of environmental preservation by associating with several local actors. Thus, it ended up becoming later the initiator of a green house for the collection and the sorting of the domestic garbage of the neighbouring village.

Besides, the establishment entered into the setting up of good practices and the requirements of the „Green Key stamp“ that is the first international environmental stamp for the ecological tourist lodging. This environmental politics is applied by the management of the establishment that makes the follow-up and the control of the procedures of it. It also applies a strategy of communication on the results is adopted, as much for the customers as for the staff. To shortcoming the involvement to relative state-controlled programs of accompaniment to the environment as the project of Good Environmental Management piloted by the Ministry of the Tourism, the management of the establishment testifies and communicate publicly on the subject of the experience in the setting of several events (Symposia; conferences ...etc) A conscientious choice is done in every decision making in order to privilege a lasting relation towards the territory and its communities. Besides, the construction is integrated well with the natural and architectural environment giving an aspect of a historic Kasbah restored, with a limited visual impact, whose priority is given to the local materials (local stone, adobe, oil of linen, tadelakt). Its environmental management has been valued through the following elements:

- Water, energy and chemicals;
- waste;
- The Politics of purchases;
- The environmental sensitisation;
- The integration of the local population.

### **2.2.1 Water, energy and chemicals**

The consumption of water of the establishment is average and varies between 120 and 140 m<sup>3</sup>/an, while referring to the relative picture to the assessment of consumptions of water and energy (CRDT 2007). The water of good quality, was obtained from three sources:

- water of the public network
- water of a well
- rain water.

It is relevant to note that the staff of Ecolodge which is about fifteen people lodged and fed on the site, consumes close to 20 % of water of the network. The watering of plants is done with the water drawn from the well and the soil is protected to limit the evaporation by a system of shadiness and windbreak.

The network of rain water evacuation is separated from that of purification. The plumbing is equipped with debit reducers and the kitchen is endowed with two regularly drained ferries.

With regard to the reduction of water consumption, several measures are undertaken:

- verification of the flights;
- change of napkins and sheets (on demand once in three days);
- use of faucets with mixing valves
- hunt of water doubles speed with mechanism switch and vat to 6 liters;
- indications in the bathroom;
- watering of the garden reasoned: water of the well, system of drop to drop and irrigation at the end of day;
- station of phyto-purification for the recycling of used water;
- maintenance products and of bathroom biodegradable.

The consumption of energy of the establishment is extra effective (*CRDT* 2007).

For the reduction of energy consumption, several measures are also undertaken:

- natural ventilation;
- daylight encouraged;
- notice board for the indication and the sensitization;
- bulbs of low energy consumption (LED);
- use of the ETR, technologies of renewable energy (80 % of electricity descended of the photovoltaic and water heaters exclusively solar).

The establishment doesn't use any chemicals. To this effect, new natural products on the basis of lemon; vinegar; bicarbonates and clay are considered as alternative products (cf. tab. 1):

### **2.2.2 Waste**

A partnership with a company of waste collection (Progress Action Citizen, Agadir) has been signed for the sorting and the collection of waste. Part of the organic garbage is reused as compost and the other part is given to the house pets.

The customers of the establishment can valorize some of their waste thanks to a session of manufacture of compost for the biologic garden and valorize some garbage of packing in the shop of the handicraft and the art. The policy in offices is aiming at the optimization of the use of paper. According to the Atlas Kasbah the good management of the waste is assured by:



Tab. 1: Example of alternative products and their Instructions for use

Utility	Chemical Product	Alternative Product	Instructions for use
<b>Toilet cleaning</b>	Javel water; Chemical toilet Cleaning	Sodium bicarbonate, vinegar, boiling water.	Yellow spots-recent at the bottom:1 tablespoon of Sodium bicarbonate, brush and flush , - Yellow spots embedded in the bottom: 3 tablespoons of Sodium bicarbonate , 3 tablespoons of salt, 1 cup of vinegar, boiling water, brush, let stand and brush back .
<b>Washing dishes</b>	Dishwashing liquid containing chemicals products	Bicarbonate; Sodium-crystal, essential oil	- Bottle of 500 ml, 1 of bicarbonate, 1 tablespoon of Sodium-crystal, 15 drops of essential oil
<b>Detergent to the ash</b>	Laundry products containing chemicals	Ash	soak two cups of ash in 1 liter of water for 24 hours, stirring occasionally, filter the mixture very fine (coffee filter), use 2 cups of this mixture after washing

*N.B: The cardboard is used for the perm culture in order to preserve the humidity under the plants and trees by introducing carbon*

*Source: Ecolodge Kasbah*

- the implementation of the rule of the 3RV: to reduce, re-employer, to recycle, to valorize;
- the reduction of the objects to unique use and not of individual conditioning;
- the storage of the garbage in a non visible place by the customer and without the nuisance of smell;
- the establishment is entirely tobacco free except on the outside terraces;
- the conservation of the leaves printed to the recto for the rough draft.

Table 2 shows a summary concerning the retained garbage.

### 2.2.3 Politics of purchases

The politics of purchase adopted by the Ecolodge was based on 3 principles:

- setting up of a biologic vegetable garden with organic manure use;
- respect for the product season;
- valuing of the local products and non pollutants (pottery, canvas of jute, reeds).

### 2.2.4 Environmental sensitization:

The establishment leads a politics of sensitising and educating to the environment for the customers. The sensitising and the staff's formation make itself

in a permanent manner, view that this last is descended of the neighbouring village and doesn't have an experience in the domain.

Otherwise, the shutter sensitizing of the local population is present via the contribution and the involvement to local environmental programs, with organisms, associations or groups of work. In the same way, the establishment convenient of other shapes of sensitizing as:

- web site and Facebook page;
- bet at the disposal of the customer of a set of thematic documents (botanical booklet; booklet birds.)
- formation to the steps of the quality.

Tab. 2: Volumes of waste recycling (2010)

	Carton [kg]	Glass [kg]	Plastic [kg]
<b>January</b>	0	29	35
<b>February</b>	0	26	26
<b>Marsh</b>	0	52	55
<b>April</b>	0	26	33
<b>May</b>	0	48	45
<b>June</b>	10	20	30
<b>July</b>	5	35	53
<b>August</b>	30	30	20
<b>September</b>	3	10	25
<b>October</b>	18	130	120
<b>November</b>	13	105	60
<b>December</b>	0	52	55
<b>Total</b>	79	563	557

Source: Ecolodge Kasbah

#### 2.2.4 Integration of the local population

The team of the Ecolodge is to the number of 15 employees, 8 permanent and 7 occasional descended of the neighboring village. Endowed with a social cover, they work in a mind of polyvalency in full incentive, and in a domestic climate, with a possibility to express itself/themselves on the conditions of work. The framing and the accompaniment to see the continuing education even is assured by the administration of the establishment.

The establishment built a good relation of cooperation with the local population while contributing to its well being by the support and the financing of the events of socioeconomic nature. The local population is involved in activities related to tourism. Therefore, it benefits financially from some activities proposed by the Ecolodge, notably, the rides tourists take on donkeys or the guides provided by locals to customers.

Another form of integration of the inhabitants of the douar (village) is the use of local products and the help provided for their sale and marketin through the exhibition in display windows inside the establishment (Argan oil, Amlou, Henna and other traditional products.).

Also, the contribution of the establishment to the development of the small trades and craftsmen of the village is considered among the promoter's preoccupations.

### 3 Synthesis of the interview

The synthesis of the interview is divided into three major axes:

- assessment of the potential impact,
- existence of an environmental management,
- feasibility of the creation of a regional charter for the preservation of the environment in favour of the tourist operators.

#### 3.1 Assessment of the potential impact

This assessment is summoned in Table 3.

Tab. 3: Potential impacts of the establishment

Component	Rubric	Potential Impact
<b>Economic</b>	Employment	- Creation of 15 direct employments (Staff from the nearby village) - 50 indirect jobs - Encouragement of artisans of the village
	Local economy	- Promotion of the local products - Participation of the local population in the organization of hiking and horse riding
<b>Social</b>	Culture and patrimoine	- Helping the local culture - Valorization of the local tangible and intangible heritage - Preservation of the architectural art and the local construction materials
	Society	- Financing the social events - Respect the habits and the Religion
<b>Environmental</b>	Physical area	- Controlled intrusion in the Reserve Biosphere of Argan forest - Preservation of the Argan tree - Water management: phyto-purification - Energy management: solar panels - Waste management: selective tri, creation of the green house

Source: own survey

#### 3.2 Existence of an environmental management

In order to maintain its reputation as an ally of the nature, Atlas Kasbah practices an environmental policy that aims to minimize all negative impact on the environment. Some examples are:

- following a daily routine with the aim notably of respecting the environment in terms of rationalization of water, economy of energy and reduction of the non recyclable waste;
- educating themselves regularly;

- enhancing the local natural and cultural heritage;
- enforcing the environmental legislation
- making the respect of the environment a fundamental aspect in the decision making process;
- establishing some partnerships with the local for the purchases and making sure that the locals share this same respect for the environment;
- giving satisfaction to those visitors who are concerned with environmental policy;
- supporting the projects of the local civic associations.

As a matter of fact, it should be noted that in spite of the absence of the ISO 14001 certification, to guarantee the best application of these engagements is a challenge to raise, this is the reason for which Ecolodge has instituted an environmental management system on the basis of the tools related to the Green Key.

In brief, the manager of the establishment being very satisfied by the environmental practices recognizes, however, the existence of some constraints namely those related to investments in this domain which requires considerable resources, and a timid participation in its marketing which has only reached a 40 % level.

### **3.3 Feasibility of the creation of a regional charter for the preservation of the environment in favor of the tourist operators**

Because the preservation and the valorization of the natural resources and at the same time increasing the quality of the benefits in terms of revenues as well as customer loyalty prove to be a rational goal, it is imperative to institute a regional charter for the preservation of the environment as an important initiative to undertake. This charter should first reinforce the quality of the services provided then the preservation of the environment. On the other hand, the conception of a guide of good practices destined to the professionals in the tourism industry outlining local solutions for the preservation of the environment can only strengthen the awareness of the importance of the good environmental practices.

Finally, the administrator clearly expressed his willingness to adhere and to participate actively in its institution because it represents a landmark tool in providing quality service in the preservation of the environment.

## **4 Result of the questionnaire**

The survey of this study is based on a sample of 45 foreign tourists. Even if – seen the quite modest size of the sample – the results should not be over estimated, we suppose that they give a good tendency on the kind of tourists, who might be targeted by those specific offers. The majority of pioneers in ecotourism is still coming from France (cf. tab. 4). The age group of the sample that almost three fourth are between 30 and 50 years old.

With 40 % quite a high share of the guests are repeaters, even if 60 % are for the first time in the region.

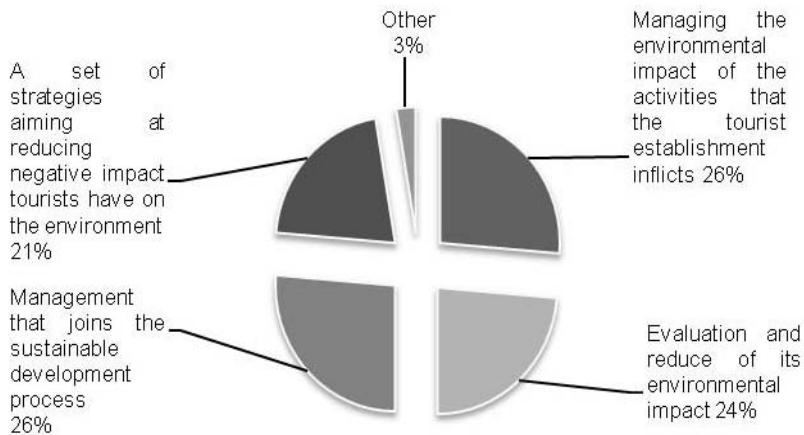
On the other hand, only about 20 % of the those interviewed have already visited Ecolodge and expressed their satisfaction with the geographical location. With regard to the satisfaction with Agadir destination about 86 % of tourists interviewed were very satisfied with their choice of destination.

As for the means of transportation, the plane comes in first place with 75 % followed by private vehicles with 25 %.

Thereafter, the assessment of the perception of the interviewees concerning the green management permitted in general to underline the fact

that nearly the half of the residents made the link between the environmental management and the tourist activity in which they are actors (cf. fig. 5).

Fig. 5: The environmental management definition by the residents



Source: own survey Elboudribili

To demonstrate if the tourists take in consideration the environmental factor in the choice of their lodgings places, a question was asked about the interest given to labels. So 57 % of the tourists answered affirmatively. On the other hand, 80 % declare that a label guaranteed the seriousness of the environmental goal of the institution (cf. fig. 6).

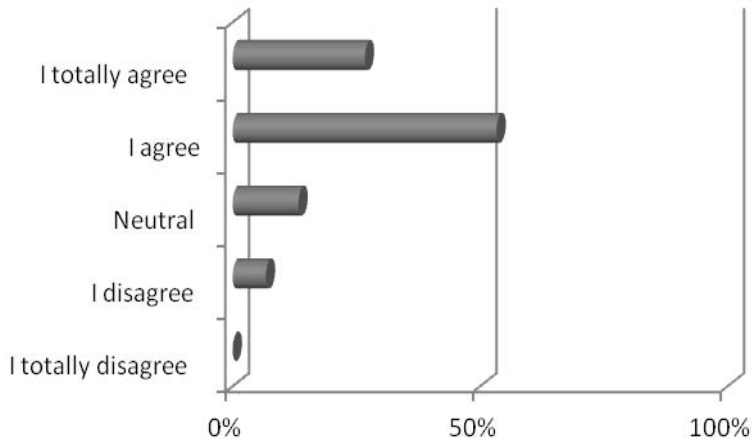
The main arguments in this sense are that a label guarantees an assessment according to a referential common and imply a process of control as well as a demanding specifications. Besides, it assures an ideological accompaniment

Tab. 4: Nationalities of the guests

Nationalities	Nb	%
French	27	60,0 %
Belgian	6	13,3 %
English	12	26,7 %
German	0	0 %
Spanish	0	0 %
Russian	0	0 %
Others	0	0 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: own survey

Fig. 6: Labels importance in the choice of the welcome establishment



Source: own survey Elboudribili

of the project to be sure that the establishment follows the good environmental practices.

In short, the whole sample of the survey believes in the environmental practices of the Ecolodge.

In the same way, the customers also have a very important role to play in maintaining the good environmental practices in the establishments that shelters them. It is in this sense that 23 % of the interviewees avoid leave faucets flowing uselessly while immediately signaling all water flight and opt for minimizing the use of the air-conditioning or the heating, About 14 % sort out waste and 12 % extinguish lights and avoid leaving the television set on. However a great deal still remains to be done concerning environmental awareness.

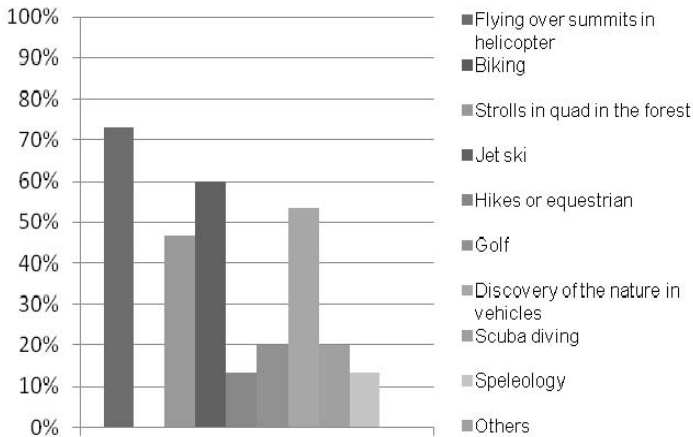
In terms of water consumption, respondents were very conscious of the importance of this resource getting more and more rare in the national territory. This is reflected, in the fact that 50 % of the sample consumed less than 50 liters per day; whereas 30 % consumed between 50 and 100 liters per day.

Of other parts, the practice of some activities that tourists engage in can be very detrimental to the environment. Indeed, according to the opinions collected (cf. fig. 7) flights over mountain summits in helicopter, the jet skis and the discovery of the nature using vehicle and exploration of the forests in big squads are those activities that have the more of negative effect on the ecosystems, with percentages of 73 %; 60 %; 53 % and 47 %.

As for the restoration and the consideration of the products issued from biologic agriculture have a big importance among the respondents. About 86 % of them are convinced of health benefits.

In end, all the tourists clearly showed an interest in the traditional products that they take with them to remember their experience and as a contribution to the local development.

Fig. 5: The environmental management definition by the residents



Source: own survey Boudribili

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

In the goal to deepen the research on the contribution of the environmental management to the success of the durability within the tourist establishments, the choice of the Ecolodge Atlas Kasbah proved to be a well justified choice. The assessment of this enterprise took place using an assessment card, an interview with the administrator and an in-depth analysis of the results of the questionnaire in addition to the points of view of the customers. The result was a serious engagement concerning the respect of the environment and the application of a rational management founded on the principles of sustainable development. Nevertheless this management is advised to improve by encouraging the establishment to review its environmental objectives frequently and to identify the strong positive initiatives to undertake (wind; eco-geo-tourist circuits; farm animals, etc.).

It should also be observed that this establishment is rather frequented by an aware target that generally adheres to the ecological call. It constitutes, a heterogeneous sample generally satisfied by the offered service. The Ecolodge remains finally a pioneering experience in this kind of tourist activity that deserves a large diffusion and an application on similar cases. This will only be implemented if a charta of environmental quality is established to enforce the quality of services provided and aiming at enhancing environmental quality.

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## **Transforming and Managing Destinations: Tourism and Leisure in a Time of Global Change and Risks**

Constant change is typical of tourism as a spatial and social phenomenon. Tourist destinations, activities, products, segments, mobilities etc. are constantly changing and they are also transforming the physical, social, cultural and economic environment of tourism.

This dualistic nature of tourism has contributed to regional development and economic growth, in general, but also created challenges and problems to environment. In addition, the intensified global change, including globalisation, has created risks for tourism development and tourist destinations. All this calls for better knowledge on tourism and tourism development and management, and also more sustainable practices in growth management.

The overall purpose of this publication is to discuss the transformation of tourism as a geographical idea and the management of tourist destinations in a time of intensified global changes and evolving risks. It contains selected papers presented at the symposium of the Commission on Tourism, Leisure and Global Change of the International Geographical Union which took place at Trier Germany from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

The subjects range from global risks and risk management in tourism and challenges for the (sustainable) positioning of tourist destinations over governance aspects in destination development and ICT related challenges in tourism to innovations and transformation in tourism development as well as cross-border aspects in tourism.