

The effects of the Covid-19 crisis on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures: The case study of Tyrolian holiday hotels

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Abstract

Climate change is increasingly gaining importance in the literature and media. Due to the fact that alpine tourism regions are very vulnerable to climate change and the resulting temperature changes, it is important to raise awareness of possible mitigation and adaptation measures to counteract the problem. In addition to climate change issues, the tourism industry was hit particularly hard by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. This study investigated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the hotel industry. In addition, this thesis examined how hotel owners work against climate change during and after the Covid-19 crisis. The area studied was the tourism destination Tyrol in Austria. Hotel owners were approached to gather information on how their establishments were affected by the pandemic and what the biggest challenges were. Furthermore, participants were asked to give information to what degree they perceive climate change, and if so, what adaptation and mitigation strategies are being implemented to address the impacts and causes of the issue. Finally, respondents were questioned about their plans for further climate action in the next 2-3 years and what they think is important to be resilient for the future.

This thesis followed a qualitative research approach, where semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 hotel owners of the destination. The hoteliers were chosen according to the hotel-star category and their availability. It was assumed that the Covid-19 crisis affected all hotels equally in terms of lack of perspective, liquidity problems and employee retainment. Furthermore, the researcher assumed that large hotels implement more measures to counteract climate change due to greater financial security and the increased investment possibilities. The interviews were carried out in spring 2021 and data processing was completed by analyzing the main patterns obtained from the interview transcripts. The interviews revealed some discrepancy between the participants. Whilst the majority of participants attached great importance to mitigating and adapting to climate change, some hoteliers from small hotels indicated that they are only concerned about their revenue. Nevertheless, the participants on the whole demonstrated that their establishments were heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis.