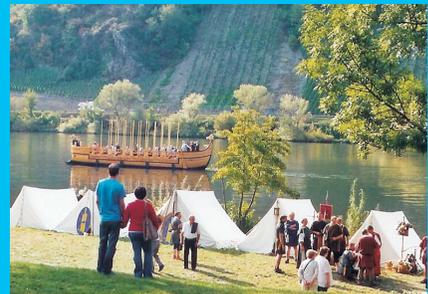


# Transforming and Managing Destinations

## 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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*Herausgegeben von Werner Gronau, Andreas Kagermeier und Monika Rulle*

## **Volume 7**

Andreas Kagermeier & Jarkko Saarinen (Hrsg.)

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

83 figures & 48 tables

2012

Verlag MetaGIS-Systems, Mannheim

Cover photos:

- Wein- und Ferienregion Bernkastel-Kues (top, down right)
- A. Kagermieier (down left)

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Printed in Germany

Layout und Satz: Freizeit- und Tourismusgeographie, Universität Trier

Verlag: MetaGIS-Systems, Mannheim

ISBN: 978-3-936438-41-3

ISSN: 1869-7909

Bibliografische Information Der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;

detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;

detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

Information bibliographique de Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek a répertorié cette publication dans la Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;

les données bibliographiques détaillées peuvent être consultées sur Internet à l'adresse <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

# **Small scale locally owned tourism in the Mid-Rift region, Kenya: Current realities and future possibilities**

*Gesa Kobs & Andreas Kagermeier (Trier)*

Key Words: Small scale locally owned tourism enterprises, market access, Kenya

## **1 Abstract**

During the last decades tourism projects of international NGOs and governmental cooperation in so called “developing countries” have been focusing on stimulating and facilitating small scale initiatives of communities and private stakeholders.

However, the success of those projects seems to be limited. The paper focuses on key aspects that are relevant for a successful participation in the market of small scale community and private market actors.

Using a case study of the Mid Rift Region in Kenya, this paper investigates product quality, market access and market communication concerning small scale locally owned tourism enterprises. Those key factors seem to be often neglected when international cooperation organizations are assisting community or small scale private projects.

Hence the study can be understood as a plea for taking into account crucial market aspects and integrating tourism professionals in cooperation projects. Perhaps international aid is still too much focusing on the positive effects of poverty alleviation and neglecting to a certain extent the necessities for successful market participation. Capacity building should include and respect the basic frame conditions of the tourism market.

## **2 Introduction and Literature Review**

For many years a major focus of tourism research has been lying on creating policies dealing with the contribution of tourism to sustainable development in developing countries. Critical discussion about tourism in developing countries increased people’s awareness of social inequality, raising conflicts and environmental damage.

With the demand for sustainable tourism development, and consequently, for more participation of local people, the implementation of small scale locally owned and community based tourism enterprises has been promoted increasingly. Projects of international NGOs and governmental cooperation in devel-

oping countries have been focused on stimulating and facilitating small scale initiatives of communities and private stakeholders, because it is considered to empower rural communities and to make a substantial contribution to development and the eradication of poverty (Stone & Stone 2011; Manyara & Jones 2007; Rogerson 2003).

Furthermore small scale community tourism can contribute to strengthen the economic, cultural and social structures within a community (Goodwin 2006; Asker et. al. 2010). It adds value to the national tourism product through diversification of tourism, increasing volume and economies of scale (Rozemeijer 2001).

Summing up, small scale community tourism could be identified as a socio-economic opportunity that can raise living standards, particularly in poor rural or marginal areas. But the success of those projects seems to be limited.

According to Goodwin few small scale community initiatives have generated sufficient benefits, even though community based tourism has been encouraged since the 1970s (Goodwin 2006). Several studies indicate following reasons why those projects fail (Ashley & Goodwin 2007; Goodwin 2009, 2008, 2006; Salazar 2012; Mitchell & Muckosy 2008):

- Lack of financial viability: due to poor market access and poor governance
- Lack of cooperation: small scale community initiatives rarely form partnerships with the private sector, including travel agents and tour operators
- Lack of commercial orientation: local people are not aware that selling crafts, food, accommodation etc. to tourists is the way to guarantee a sustainable supply of local income
- Lack of attention to product quality: low service level and condition of facilities
- Lack of benefits: economical and social benefits
- Inappropriate tourism facilities: Too many projects depend on building capital intensive facilities like lodges, which need regularly maintenance.
- Lack of Professional training, especially concerning guiding and hospitality skills
- Not meeting the market standards
- Too strong focus on the positive effects of poverty alleviation by International aid: International aid mostly concentrates on community development while disregarding the need of business expertise and successful market participation.

Most of the projects seem to fail due to lack of market access, which is also related to lack of financial viability and management skills (Manyara et al. 2006; Rozga & Spencely 2006). Aderhold agrees in that point and additionally states that “the bottleneck for the future development of small scale community tourism lies not in the need of demand” (2011, p. 6), but *rather* in a lack of market access to potential travelers. In addition he claims that there is a “lack of consumer knowledge of the existence of CBT” (2011, p. 6).

*Epler Wood International* even stated that a prioritization on other aspects as business success is a “cart before the horse approach that does not acknowledge market and business realities, and results in many projects that are not succeeding in the marketplace” (2004, p. 8).

As a result market access seemed to be the missing link for small scale community tourism. This key factor seems to be often neglected when international cooperation organizations are assisting community or small scale private

projects. Hence the study can be understood as a plea for taking into account central market aspects and integrating tourism professionals in respective small scale locally owned tourism projects.

Based on a case study in the Mid Rift Region in Kenya this research focuses on small scale tourism enterprises which are locally owned by at least one community member. Emphasis is placed on market access and market communication of existing small scale locally owned initiatives.

### 3 Case study

#### 3.1 Tourism situation in Kenya

Tourism is one of Kenya's key economic activities. It represents the third greatest contribution to the Gross Domestic Product after agriculture and manufacturing and plays an important role in the economic development of the country regarding foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and poverty alleviation (*Kibara* 2012).

As one of the leading tourist destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya is known for a tourism industry which is heavily based on beach tourism and wildlife safaris. But apart from the tropical beaches and diverse wildlife, the country is endowed with many other tourist attractions like a rich indigenous culture, scenic landscapes and archeological sites (*Kibara* 2012, *Harris* 2012).

However, like many other developing countries, Kenya is confronted with the challenge of diversifying the tourism product. Accordingly Kenya is in need to extend its tourism image of beach and safari tourism to diverse and unique attractions and activities.

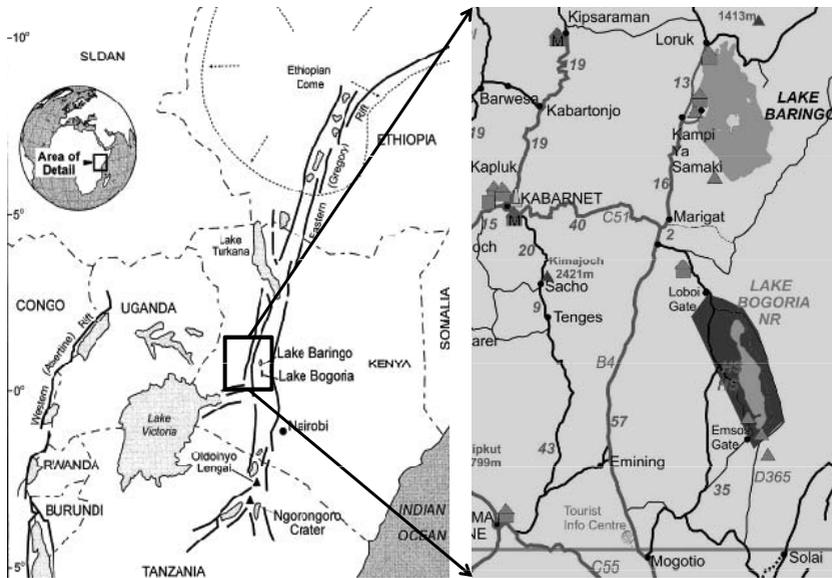
Hence the long term national strategy "Vision 2030" intend to position Kenya as "a top-ten long-haul tourist destination in the world that offers a high-end, diverse and distinctive visitor experience" (*Government of Kenya* 2007, p. 10).

#### 3.2 Study Area Mid Rift Region

The paper focuses on the small scale locally owned tourist enterprises which are located in the Mid Rift region. The region was chosen because it is an area with a certain tradition of touristic activities and many attractions and on the other hand an area which is not included in the traditional Kenyan tourism product. This is owed by the fact, that the Mid Rift neither is a classical safari destination – lack of the "Big Fives" (lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard, and rhinoceros) – nor is closed enough to the coast. Nevertheless the region offers a big variety of special interest tourism like sport tourism (paragliding, high altitude long distance running, hiking) and nature based tourism like bird watching. With those niche products the Mid Rift Region can contribute to diversify Kenya's tourism product, as it is aimed in the Vision 2030.

The study area includes Kabarnet, Lake Baringo, Lake Bogoria (cf. fig. 1). The two lakes belong to the Rift Valley system. Lake Baringo is a freshwater lake, while Lake Bogoria is a salt water lake that is globally known for a large population of migratory birds.

Fig. 1: Location of the Mid Rift Region



Source: Own design based on to Ashley et al. 2002, p.687; North Rift Tourism Association 2012

While Mogotio is situated in the Koibatek district, the other locations are located in the administrative district of Baringo. Both districts are Part of the Kenyan Rift Valley Province. The main kinds of livelihood in Baringo District are livestock and crop farming, fishing and wildlife-based tourism. Most of the Labour force is unskilled and semi-skilled. Human population density is relatively low, about 30 persons per km<sup>2</sup> and poverty is widespread in the district with 35 % of the population. The main communities in Baringo County are Pokots, Ilchamus, Kalenjins and Turkanas (PWC 2005). One specific aspect of the study region is, that in Mogotio one of the first regional based Tourist Information Centre of Kenya has been established, which might function as possible marketing instrument for the Mid Rift region. Following the main sub-destinations will be presented.

**Lake Baringo**

Lake Baringo is a freshwater Lake which is located in eastern Rift Valley in Kenya and has a surface area of about 144 km<sup>2</sup>. As a tourist destination Lake Baringo offers wildlife namely hippos, crocodiles and a high variety of birds. The main tourist attractions are boat trips, bird walks and cultural village visits. Accommodation ranges from premium lodges to mid-priced alternatives. In total there are five lodges / tented camps and one campsite. Most of the accommodations offer their own activities, additionally there are at least five locally run boat trip companies and some local individuals without a bureau offering boat trips, bird walks and visits to cultural village (Kipkoech 2012, Mid Rift Tourism Forum 2011, North Rift Tourism Association 2012).

### **Lake Bogoria**

Other than Baringo Lake Bogoria is an alkaline lake with several hot springs, which lies about 10 km North of the equator. It is a Ramsar site and was designated as a National Reserve in 1974. With more than 1.5 million flamingos Lake Bogoria sometimes supports the highest population of flamingos within the rift valley lakes. Apart from the huge population of flamingos the area is characterised by a high diversity at low densities of wildlife. A herd of rare Greater Kudu, zebra, baboon, warthog, caracal, spotted hyena, impala, dik dik and many small mammals can be found within the reserve. Additionally there are around 350 bird species in the reserve. Besides two campsites in the reserve, there are two community campsites and one premium hotel outside the reserve (*Kipkoech 2012, Mid Rift Tourism Forum 2011, County Council of Baringo 2007*).

### **Kabarnet and Tugen Hills**

Located between Marigat and Eldoret, the mountain village Kabarnet stands at the peak of the Tugen Hills. It is the capital town of Baringo District. The touristic highlight of the town is a small museum featuring objects of ethnographic interest as well as small reptile park (*Mid Rift Tourism Forum 2011*). There are different types of accommodations, mostly not meeting the international standard (anymore). However a recent development of private home stays around Kabarnet can be observed.

The Tugen Hills are known for green trees and fields, cool breezes and panoramic views. They divide the Great Rift into two parallel North-South valleys; the Kerio Valley to the west and the Baringo Valley to the east. Located about 30 km in the north of Kabarnet, Kipsaraman community museum exhibits humanoid fossils. Furthermore a part of the Trans Rift Trail crosses the Tugen Hills. As the first real hiking trail in Kenya with a long history, the trail is a significant part of Kenya's heritage (*Mid Rift Tourism Forum 2011*). The Trans Rift Trail hiking guides with different specialisations are mainly locals and have been trained by the Chief Warden of Lake Bogoria National Reserve.

### **Equator Visitors' Information Mogotio**

The Visitor Centre was developed by the Mid Rift Tourism Forum and built by Koibatek County Council with a grant from the European Union. Its purpose is to inform the tourist entering the Mid Rift region and additionally to become a destination link point. Main goal of the Mid Rift Forum is to promote tourism in the Rift Valley. Forum Members are drawn from the Private Sector as well as the four local District Councils in the area. With the Rift Tourism Association there is another platform targeting the promotion of tourism the region. Both institutions have an own website, presenting the tourism attractions of Kenya's Rift Valley including Baringo district (*North Rift Tourism Association 2012, Mid Rift Tourism Forum 2011*).

As shown by the presentation of the specific locations, a variety of small scale locally owned tourism enterprises, touristic activities and many attractions exist in the Mid Rift region. The next chapter will introduce the research method used to analyse the role of market access regarding small scale locally owned tourism enterprises.

### 3.3 Research Method

To relate theory and practice data was gathered through document and media analysis as well as guided interviews, personal observation and mystery checks. The first exploring visit to identify the small scale locally owned tourism enterprises within the Mid Rift region was in August and September 2011. According to following criteria the tourism initiatives were selected:

- Owned by local individuals or community;
- actively involved in tourism related activities;
- small scale (1 to 30 members / employees).

The main sources to identify the tourism initiatives have been an online search, the support of the Chief Warden of Lake Bogoria National Reserve and an onsite search. 18 small scale locally owned tourism initiatives were identified and divided into individually owned (IO) and community-owned (CO) tourism enterprises. Table 1 illustrates which kind of tourism initiatives were identified and whether they are individually or community owned.

Most of the 13 interviews were conducted during a second visit in April and May 2012. The interview partner was either the owner or an employee. Besides the efforts being made regarding market access, crucial aspects concerning the success of small scale tourism were taken into account

*Tab. 1: Tourism initiatives in the Mid Rift Region*

	CO	IO
Boat trip company	x	x
Cultural village	x	
Museum	x	
Campsite	x	
Home stay		x
Guides		x

*Source: Own survey*

in the guided interviews. Three additional interviews were conducted in Nairobi with various support organisations (Ecotourism Kenya, Ministry of Tourism and Federation of Community Based Tourism Organizations).

### 3.4 Limitation of the study

The study was subject to certain limitations; in particular:

- Study population: it is possible that some initiatives were not identified (e.g. due to no market access at all).
- Information provided by enterprises: Some interview partners did not give all information, they were afraid of the competitors.
- Limited availability of manager or owner: It was hard to reach the owner, so some interviews were conducted with employees, who could not answer all questions.
- Language barriers: it was only possible to speak to individual community members with the assistance of a translator. But the people who know the specific ethnic mother tongue and English were mostly in a high position, so that this could have hindered the community member to give all information.
- Information quality: since book keeping was rarely done, reliable information about occupancy and economic performance were missing.

- Possible misuse of the term “community”: some enterprises used the term community as a marketing tool; it was not possible to independently measure or verify responses.

### 3.5 Findings

The small scale tourism enterprises in the Mid Rift region were struggling with access to the tourism market, physically, operational as well as financially. In the meantime they showed a respectable performance regarding so called success factors like donor dependence, language skills and natural and cultural attraction. Table 2 illustrates the evaluation of the performance of small scale tourism enterprises in the Mid Rift region concerning the factors of success with special focus on the aspects influencing market access.

Tab. 2: Performance Evaluation

Location		Baringo		Bogoria	Tugen Hills
General Information	Ownership	Community	Individual	Community	Individual
	Number of members/ employees	1–30	1–5	1–20	1–5
	Type of offer	Cultural village visits	Boat trips, bird and nature walks	Campsites, nature walks	Home stays, nature hike, museum
	Donor dependent	++	+	+	++
	Product quality	o	o	o	o
	USP	--	-	+	+
	Language skills, knowledge of culture, nature	-	++	+	+
Physical market access	Level of accessibility	--	o	-	-
	Distance to main tourist attraction	o	++	+	-
Operational market access	Marketing	--	-	o	-
	Cooperation	--	o	-	-
Resource based market aspect	Level of reinvesting in market access	--	-	o	-
	Business skills	--	o	o	-

Explanation: ++ = very good, + = good, o = average, - = poor, -- = very poor

Source: Own survey

### **Physical market access**

By means of physical market access external and internal aspects needed to be considered.

- **External**

The distance to the main tourist attraction (Lake Baringo, Lake Bogoria and Kabarnet museum) and the accessibility of the enterprise (road condition) were taken into account as external aspects. Most of the tourism enterprises are situated in medium distance (15-30 minutes by car) to the main attraction and are difficult to access due to a poor road condition. The Baringo boat companies are an exception, they are and need to be located next to the lake.

The interview partners agreed on the poor accessibility of the region, most roads are in a very poor condition. Hence most interview partner stated “better roads” as the main request to the government.

- **Internal aspects**

Physical market access is also given through representation on the internet. None of the identified enterprises has an own website and few will be found directly by searching via keywords like “type” and “location of the enterprise” using a search engine (e.g. “Bogoria Campsite”). Even if some individuals have a private facebook account, they are not using it as a marketing tool. This could be explained by a high mobile phone density and a low rate of computer ownership in the region. To ignore the internet access problem some interview partners were keen to encourage their visitors to spread the word about their product. They asked the visitors to share pictures and experiences through the internet. Accordingly they were aware of the importance of using the internet as a tool for market access.

Also the website of the Mid Rift Tourism Forum includes detailed information about the Equator Visitors’ Information and three identified tourism enterprises. Information about the Visitor Centre is also available on the website of the North Rift Tourism Association, but just one of the enterprises is mentioned briefly.

- **Future possibilities regarding physical market access**

The improvement of the road condition is not under the responsibility of the local tourism entrepreneurs. However regarding the Vision 2030 the Kenyan government started to improve the Nakuru – Baringo – Turkana road. Hence in future time the tourism initiatives in the Mid Rift region will profit.

Most interview partners were lacking access to the internet regarding the hardware. Nevertheless there are possibilities to be presented on a website and some early movers could be identified by being aware of the importance of the internet. The combination of the high density of mobile phones and lack of computers could lead to a focus on using social media. With a mobile phone it will be difficult to establish and maintain a website, meanwhile it is possible to upload photos and write short messages via social media. Hence facebook could be used to access the market.

Additionally with the websites of the Mid Rift Tourism Forum and the North Rift Tourism Association small scale tourism initiatives have a possibility to be presented online with little effort.

## Operational market access

The operational market access includes marketing and cooperation.

### • *External aspects*

On the external level little marketing was done with regard to the Mid Rift region. The main objective of the Kenyan Tourism Board (KTB) is to market Kenya locally and internationally as a tourist destination. However the Mid Rift region is not included in the main marketing campaigns conducted by the KTB. Most of the interview partners criticised the KTB for “leaving them alone” and focusing on the main tourist attraction.

Moreover with Ecotourism Kenya, the Federation of Community Based Tourism (FECTO) and Kenya Community Based Tourism (KECOBAT) non-governmental organisation focusing on small scale, sustainable or community based tourism initiatives exist in Kenya. Their common mission is to support and promote those tourism projects. Nevertheless except of Ecotourism Kenya they are rarely active in the Mid Rift region and so far could not support the initiatives. Hence just few initiatives belong to the target group due to not involving the whole community /being community based.

Cooperation between the small scale initiatives and the private large scale tourism companies seemed to be very limited.

The Visitor Information centre has an enormous potential to connect the three locations and to promote the Mid rift as a destination, but this potential is not used. It is hard to get any information about the small scale tourism enterprises or contact details, not to mentioning printed information.

Cooperation between the small scale initiatives and the private large scale tourism companies seemed to be very limited.

The Visitor Information centre has an enormous potential to connect the three locations as well as the regional small and large scale tourism enterprises in order to promote the Mid Rift region as a destination, but this potential is not yet fully exploited. It is hard to get any information about the small scale tourism enterprises or contact details, not to mentioning printed information.

### • *Internal aspects*

The small scale enterprises were characterized by poor marketing activities. Most of the interview partners were not sure about the best way of marketing their product. As an example the case of the boat operators at the lake Baringo will be introduced.

“Marketing on the spot” is the common activity for the majority of the boat operators, since most of the accommodation facilities at the lake Baringo are also offering boat trips. For that reason the boat operators try to inform the visitors before they enter the hotel. But some tourists feel very uncomfortable being harassed by more than 6 tour operators trying to market their product. Meanwhile the tour operators are complaining about “price dumping” and “stress of competition”. Even if it could help reducing the price dumping and increasing the visitor’s satisfaction none of the tour operator is willing to form an association or start a horizontal cooperation, because of personal and ethical differences. Moreover every boat company claimed to be community

based or at least “supporting the poor” meanwhile all the other competitors are “lying”.

Nevertheless the most successful boat operator is also the most active regarding marketing issues. He has a long lasting partnership with a Dutch tour operator and participated twice on a national trade fair.

None of the tourism enterprises could present a marketing plan. Only two of them identified a target group (e.g. dutch group tourists, domestic students from Nairobi) and develop suitable products. One campsite manager for example hosted mainly large groups of domestic students, because he started to market the campsite through student fairs and intensive networking. Moreover he created a bonfire place suitable for large groups and offers tents for rent.

Especially for the enterprises around Lake Bogoria and the one in the Tugen Hills the main marketing is done through the Chief Warden, who is identified as a key individual promoting tourism in the Mid Rift region. They rely on the chief warden and word of mouth advertising.

- ***Future possibilities***

Regarding Vision 2030 tourism diversification as well as developing new tourism products are policy pillars of the tourism ministry. The Mid Rift Region could contribute to those aims of Vision 2030. Accordingly KTB should include the Mid Rift region into its marketing plans. In order to support the small scale tourism enterprises, FECTO and KECOBAT could be more active in this region.

Some small scale locally owned tourism enterprises already showed innovative approaches. Nevertheless most of the enterprises are in need of simple and inexpensive marketing possibilities such as printed material, road signs, as well as cooperation with tour operators.

Major focus should be laid on the Visitor Centre which could be the Basis for a future destination marketing organisation.

### **The resource based market access**

By means of resourced based market access human as well as financial resources are taken into account.

- ***External aspects***

Most of the identified tourism enterprises lack financial resources and business skills. Being asked what the government should do to support the tourism initiatives in the region, most interview partner mentioned financial help. Several interview partners stated the need of business skills and would like to attend trainings to improve their skills.

There are several NGOs in Kenya conducting trainings on capacity building or on specific topics like business skills or proposal writing. But they are not very active within the Mid Rift region. Regarding business skills there have been some workshops and FECTO for instance planned to give trainings, which will be limited to community based organisation and exclude individual owned enterprises.

- **Internal aspects**

Few interview partners had been active in terms of improving their poor business skills. Few of them could give reliable information about the economic performance of the enterprise, due to lack of bookkeeping. Nevertheless most of them indicated a low level of reinvesting in the business, if reinvesting than rather in equipment/ maintenance than in market access. Hence lack of capital prevented large marketing campaigns and the participation of international trade fairs.

- **Future possibilities**

Since some of the NGOs, which are dealing with locally owned tourism initiatives planned to conduct more workshops and trainings in the Mid Rift region, there is a chance for the enterprises to improve their business skills. Even if the trainers are rarely tourism experts and mainly community based enterprises will be included this could be reviewed as step towards the improvement of business skills. In addition the accessibility to micro credits and governmental funding could be improved.

Instead of demanding financial support the tourism enterprises should focus on improving their business skills. With effective trainings addressing business aspects, the marketing activities as well as accounting skills could be improved to increase the benefits.

## 4 Conclusion

Small scale locally owned tourism enterprises could contribute to the diversification of tourism products. However they are characterised by limited success.

This paper intended to present a practical conclusion to increase understanding about the importance of market access regarding small scale locally owned tourism enterprises. Physical, operational and resourced based access to the tourism market has been identified as the major challenges for small scale locally owned tourism enterprises. Besides internal aspects like lack of business skills or poor marketing activities, it is also important to take account of external aspects influencing the market access like accessibility of the destination or lack of involvement concerning governmental marketing.

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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.