



Summer tourism in the Alps: new options through climate change?

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The Alps are one of the most important leisure and tourism regions in Europe and tourism is one of the most important economic factors in the region. There is no doubt that winter tourism in the Alps is strongly affected by climate change. The snow reliability will decrease in the future (Agrawala, S. 2007). This implies negative effects for the tourism industry because the availability of snow strongly influences the destination choice of national and international tourists (see Pröbstl et al. 2007, Unbehaun et al. 2006). Due to climate change in summer more days of sun can be expected in the alpine space. In this context expectations of a revival of summer resort epoch of the Alps (“Sommerfrische”) in the Belle Epoque are discussed (Müller et al. 2007). This leads to the hypothesis that summer tourism in the alpine area might profit by the climate change; instead of hot beaches or dusty and warm cities in lowlands the alpine area could be an attractive alternative in future. To what extent this hypothesis applies is still unclear today.

The current study investigates in a Germany-wide representative online survey tourists’ destination choice for their alpine summer holiday. A central element of the survey is a discrete choice experiment (DCE) where the responders have to make a choice between two different alpine destinations or to travel elsewhere. DCEs are a versatile approach to simulate destination choice behaviour. The study has an innovative survey design to make the choice task more realistic. The responders face two

simulated websites of holiday destinations and have to make a decision for the preferred destination. The destinations vary in different attributes. Such a choice set is followed by a downstream climate choice option.

Further results of the study include the perception of climate change effects of visitors interested in summer tourism in the Alps and their choice behaviour considering different climate options. In this study also persons with little or no experience with holidays in the Alps are included. So the question can be investigated what their expectations are and how it is possible to win new visitors for the Alps. Also recommendations for adoption strategies can be concluded.

References:

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