Repositioning Destinations between Mass Market Requirements and High Quality Offers in Germany

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I Introduction

The first form of organized tourism in Germany started with the Grand Tour to educate the young and aristocratic in the 18th century (Freyer, 2001, p. 6). About the same time emerged the beginning of spa tourism which was also exclusively for the aristocratic classes. During the 19th century tourism slowly expanded into the upper middle classes. But it was not until the so called Third Reich in the 20th century, when for the first time in Germany tourism became a phenomenon of the masses. After Second World War large scale tourism destinations were developed in both German states especially in the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s.

During the past two decades, these post-war mass destinations, which catered for large numbers of people at a time in a small region, had often the problem of an outdated infrastructure. Many of them, being build during a boom phase in the late 1960’s, did no longer meet the recent demand and had to undertake substantial adjustments in their offers to be able to succeed in the market. The general issue is, whether mass tourism destinations can be modified according to the expectations of the modern guest.

The paper discusses the question, to what extent the understanding of “destination” with reference to mass tourism destinations has changed subsequently as a result of the change in expectations and how these German destinations have reacted to new challenge.

II Destinations for mass tourism activities

The term destination describes a geographical area (town, region, hamlet) which the specific guest or group of guests selects as a target. It contains all kinds of infrastructure necessary for accommodation, catering, entertainment and leisure activities (Bieger, 2004, p. 142). Destinations are therefore defined mainly from the viewpoint of the customer and not according to administrative borders. John-Grimm (2006, p. 19) points out that destinations have no clearly defined borders and vary strongly according to their size. For overseas travelers, the destination might be as large as a continent, whereas the spa traveler defines his destination possibly as small as a spa hotel in

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the countryside. However, destinations are generally not only defined by the guests, but include also opinions on the ground of traditions and the understanding of the local community.

Mass tourism is often simply understood as the counterpart of individual tourism, meaning the use of organized structures in tourism. Especially in the decades of economic prosperity from the 1960's onwards, in Germany mass tourism was a result of the increasing incomes together with the rise in guaranteed holidays during the post-war period. The worldwide development in communication systems and cheap transport further prepared the grounds for mass tourism (Freyer, 2001, p. 22). Tourism was ever more becoming an industry in which transport, accommodation, tour guidance and other aspects of the product being organized according to the necessities of economic success and for a large number of people. The ongoing industrialization of the tourism product has resulted in new developments of large-scale destinations in German tourism. However, one has to keep in mind that the concept of "mass tourism" has a negative connotation amongst some travelers nowadays, especially the up market travelers.

The course from individual tourism activities to mass tourism offers is reflected mainly in the growing infrastructure in the destinations. The destinations themselves changed from small-scale to destinations with complex structures. Some of the mass resorts were developed without preceding historical structures at the site. Together, they had several similarities, which are mostly valid until today: they were large-scale holiday resorts with more than 400 beds (mostly in holiday flats). They were characterized by a high density of standardized buildings within a small area of land and run with little personnel, had often self-catering facilities and were presenting rather cheap offers. The construction of the destination was accomplished by a project developer. Their development started in the traditional attractive tourism regions such as the coastlines, the low mountain ranges and the Alps.

III From family member to mass entertainment

The opportunity to use tourism offers has altered from an exclusively aristocratic activity to a mass phenomenon in the late 20th century. An estimated (and presumably exaggerated) travel intensity of 11% in Germany in 1913 increased to 20-25% in 1939 as a direct result of the strategic expansion of tourism after the seizure of power by the Nazis (Hachtmann, 2007, p. 155).

1) Growing infrastructure for growing demands

The second part of the 19th century saw a strong expansion in general German tourism infrastructure, however more in number than in variety. Apart from the seaside tourism along the North Sea and the Baltic Sea and many spa developments in the hinterland, the summer retreat in low mountain ranges was another main form of German tourism. Commonly, the guests chose always the identical destination and even the same accommodation, which was generally simple, modest and often with a close contact to the host family, which sometimes made them feel to be a part of their
family. As a means of transport, mostly the train was taken (Freyer, 2001, p. 9). In general, the chosen destinations were often situated rather close to the home town.

The growing desire for a summer retreat has to be understood as a result of the ongoing industrialization and increasing criticism of its effects like the loss of nature and freedom (Rousseau). It resulted in a strong yearning for the “authentic landscape and culture”, which remained a motivation for tourism until today (Kersten and Spode, 2000, p. 22). Therefore, the infrastructure in the destination played a secondary role and was often very simple. The accessibility of tourism for a larger group of people showed first signs of a tourism democracy.

2) Preparing the path for mass tourism
At the beginning of the 20th century, tourism increasingly followed the target of recreation and education, and finally lost its aspect of entertainment for the educated classes completely.

After Adolf Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933, tourism was identified as a subject suitable for propaganda purposes. Holiday activities became now an opportunity for all social classes, however, for the first time ever with a focus on the working classes. This development can be seen in the light of the strongly increasing numbers of visits organized by the Nazi organization “Kraft durch Freude (KdF)” (Strength through Joy). The main activities were organized hiking tours, trips by train and cruises. The annual number of visits organized through KdF grew from 2.3 million in 1934 to 10.3 million in 1938 (Freyer 2001, p. 10).

Summing up to a total of 7.4 million holiday and 38 million short trips sold by KdF between 1934 and 1939, it was the largest tour operator in the world at that time (Kersten and Spode, 2000, p. 22). This stately development of tourism for all social classes during the 1930’s brought the first signs of mass tourism. However, the activities of KdF signified only about 10% of the overall tourism in Germany.

Three main tourism activities can be identified in German tourism by 1938: the visits of towns (e.g. Heidelberg, Berlin) with an average duration of three days for business and sightseeing, the visit of mineral and mud baths like Baden-Baden for medical reasons and an average duration of nine days and finally the visit of seaside resorts like Heiligendamm on the Baltic Coast or Ahlbeck on the Island of Usedom, which were visited for recreational reasons with an average duration of stay of thirteen days (Kersten and Spode, 2000, pp. 22–23).

3) Prora: Forerunner of mass tourism destinations
Prora, a destination situated on the German island of Ruegen in the Baltic Sea, was a pre-time development of the post-war coastal mass tourism in Germany. Built as the “Seaside spa for the 20,000” between 1936 and 1942 (during the last 3 years with reduced intensity due to the war), it remained unfinished. There was no grown tourism structure at this site before. Designed with a total length of 4.5 km (of which 3.6 still exist), the complex was in thought, structure and architecture one of the predecessors of the mass tourism destinations of the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s. It was planned to host 20,000 tourists per cycle lasting each
ten days for a season of six to eight months (resulting in a total of 360,000 – 480,000 visitors per year). The infrastructure included all rooms directed to the seaside, rooms for 2,000 employees and facilities for leisure and free time as well as facilities for housekeeping and supply. It was connected via a new railway line and new roads.

Today, five out of eight blocks still exist, each six stories high. Being a listed building, the remaining complex has only been used partially. Further development is planned for 2010. The strengths of the historical plans were that Prora was supposed to offer all amenities within the destination: accommodation and catering as well as leisure time activities. This was an understanding of the requirements for a destination which is still valid until today. However, the problems for a modern development arise from the fact that it is impossible to find an investor who is financially capable to develop such a giant complex entirely.

IV GDR: Homogeneous development throughout the decades

As mentioned before, the tourism intensity in Germany rose sharply in the 1930's. Obviously, with the outbreak of the Second World War, the activity came to a standstill. After the War, tourism expanded slowly. The two countries developed separately according to their affiliation to the different political systems.

Within the German Democratic Republic, almost all private enterprises were nationalized in the early 1950's. During the forty years of the existence of the GDR, tourism was organized centrally and characterized by a deficiency both in quality and quantity of the tourism offer.

National tourism had an enormous importance due to the fact that outbound tourism was restricted to a small number of certain destinations. However, because of the poor management of the stately organized tourism industry, the individually organized forms (mainly camping) grew strongly during the years.

The large scale holiday facilities, run by the state, developed mainly between 1969 and 1987. However, there is no further differentiation in development phases possible. During this period of time, 19 destinations were opened. They were generally multi-story hotels with full board. This catering system was on the one hand part of the ideology and on the other a sign of lack of organisation as well as alternatives: there was only a little number of free restaurants available. Different to West Germany, the absence of a development of holiday flats kept the waste of land small. The full tourism service included high numbers of recreational offers and various sport equipment for rental.

As a result of the insufficient management, the infrastructure in general and the one of the spas in particular were in a poor condition at the beginning of the 1990's.

V FRG: Diversification of mass market resorts

In general, the Federal Republic of Germany saw an enormous upswing in visitor numbers. This was especially true for spa destinations, as the social system invented paid cure treatments for all in the late 1950's, lasting in general for four weeks. This development led to a strong expansion of the spa destina-
tions in the country. A similar upswing in the overall tourism figures stimulated the general tourism development towards a mass tourism phenomenon.

During the 1960’s and 1970’s rising income, increasing leisure time, guaranteed holidays and further development of means of communication and cheap transport prepared the grounds for mass tourism in West Germany (Freyer, 2001, p. 22). By 1980, tourism intensity had risen up to 58% (Hachtmann, 2007, p. 155).

Becker (2000, pp. 72–73) identified four major phases of development for mass tourism resorts in West Germany. The development of their infrastructure within these stages can be seen in close relation to their age.

1) 1950’s–1960’s: Starting phase of mass tourism destinations

Six destinations were developed as holiday villages during two decades. These tourism destinations had sometimes less than 400 beds and little accompanying infrastructure.

2) 1969–1973: Booming phase

In this short period of time, large establishments of holiday parks (first generation) were realized: 22 of the 32 new resorts have more than 1,000 beds. The largest establishments were Heiligenhafen with 5,400 beds and Damp with 5,900 beds.

These large sized resorts were planned with all facilities like indoor pool, restaurant; however they still focused mainly on the use of public infrastructure and natural surroundings. Typical for the time were high multi-story buildings (e.g. Maritim-Hotel Lübeck-Travemünde).

Often these resorts were planned along the east-west German border region, since special asset write-downs and high loss-allocations for these regions in connection with the personal interests of local politicians, which were strongly influenced by questions of prestige, pushed this progress.

3) 1974–1989: Slow development

During the third stage of mass tourism development, the new holiday villages were rather smaller, with only 20% of the 36 new establishments having more than 1,000 beds. These holiday villages were dominated by smaller units: Instead of multistory hotel- and apartment-complexes less dense holiday bungalow areas characterized these holiday villages.

Not only were they down-sized, but they were also situated in secondary tourism regions. In fact, not a single one was built on the Baltic Coast or in the traditional low mountain region like the Harz and only few in other traditional tourism regions like the Black Forest, the Alps or the shoreline of the North Sea.

4) 1990–92: No new projects

After the change of the political situation, not one project was realized mainly due to the uncertain economic situation.

5) 1993–98: New building principles

In this period eleven new projects were finished, with a tendency to larger establishments (two with 3,500 beds, one with over 1,600 beds). Apart from the increase in size, a shift in philosophy can be stated: no longer was the development of holiday villages in focus, but different projects became interesting: time-sharing
condominiums, luxurious hotels, holiday parks with tropical indoor pools and shopping malls.

Apart from new developments, this period was marked by the refurbishment of five traditional, first generation holiday parks.

Parallel to this chronological expansion of mass tourism destinations in West Germany, certain types of accommodation can be identified (Becker, 2000, p. 72):

Holiday villages
Holiday villages included only holiday bungalows, either for one or two families.

Holiday park (first generation)
This included generally at least a hotel and flats as well as holiday bungalows, at least one shop and one restaurant, in addition to leisure and entertainment offers.

Holiday park (second generation)
The infrastructure was like in the holiday park of the first generation, however, included at least 1,800 beds, an indoor pool (e. g. a “sub-tropical paradise”), a small shopping mall, several restaurants, and various leisure and entertainment offers (preferably indoor).

Large scale hotel
These hotels are mainly designed for holiday-makers and follow often a certain theme.

Brittner (2002, p. 45) discusses further developments of holiday parks in addition to the mentioned two generations: According to her, the third generation should use an effective ecological and quality management system, be architecturally integrated in the surrounding landscape and open the various leisure activities for the local community.

Recently, according to Brittner (2002, p. 45), the classification as the fourth generation of holiday parks asks for a complete thematic arrangement of the destination.

However, these further classifications remain still under discussion. Critics argue that recently ecological and quality management are obligatory for all active destinations (Steingrube, 2004, p. 222). Still, the integration of the concept in the surrounding landscape as well as the local community remains a new requirement for modern destinations.

VI Recent trends in mass tourism destinations

The recent trends since the turn of the century show either the refurbishment of traditional facilities or the development of new destinations mainly in the east of Germany, where enough space is readily available and financial support programs are still available due to the fragile economic situation. The modern destination structure is generally marked by a complex offer of infrastructure, leaving the guests with many opportunities and little open wishes. There is a wide range of integrated offers concerning accommodation, catering, and entertainment preferably indoor. The target is to keep the tourist within the destination, in order to receive a better use of the value-added chain.

1) Revitalization of a first generation mass tourism destination: Damp

The seaside spa “Damp” is situated directly on the shore of the western Baltic Coast. It was opened in 1973 as a seaside resort and
soon afterwards supplemented by a hospital and a rehabilitation clinic. From the beginning, it found its market position through the unique combination of high medical and tourism competence within a corresponding infrastructure. In a very early stage, the destination concentrated on medical wellness offers, developing and carrying out effective health and preventative programs.

Although being supplemented with further offers, by the end of the last decade major revitalization activities had to take place in order to remain competitive. As Manente and Pechlaner (2006, p. 237) point out, there are four typologies of destinations which “are most likely to be in a situation of maturity or decline” according to Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle. One of them, the typography of “coastal destination” fits for Damp. Manente and Pechlaner (2006, p. 237) point out that these resorts have to fight worldwide competition, being exchangeable in their offers. Although Damp is no “thermal destination”, which is another of the four mentioned typologies, this aspect fits as well, as its image as a spa resort was rather old-fashioned due to its linkage to health offers which tended to address mainly the senior guests. Concluding, two out of four most endangered destination types defined for the Tourism Area Life Cycle are suitable for the destination Damp.

In order to overcome “stagnation” and being able to “rejuvenate” the product according to Butler’s model, Damp started a large scale renovation of the product in 2000, with a total remodeling of the spa area and certain areas of the hotel. The next years will see a continuous upgrade of the facilities in order to reach higher quality standards. The hotel will be further renovated with a focus on far higher quality standards with lesser rooms (minus 110 rooms resulting in a total of 323 rooms). The holiday flats will be modernized as well. Additionally, a new shopping mall and an entertainment center are supposed to create a center of attention for more external guests.

Having undergone this rejuvenation processes in the coming years, Damp would clearly be able to reach the class of a fourth generation holiday park with a complete thematic arrangement as a medical wellness destination. This generation of holiday parks shows clearly a change in the definition of destination: As understood initially, they contain all kinds of infrastructure necessary for accommodation, catering, entertainment and leisure activities. However, in addition to the early developments, they keep the tourist within the destination, receiving a better use of the value-added chain.

2) Ambitious project development for the future: Land Fleesensee

The holiday park “Land Fleesensee” opened in 2000. The project development of this destination took place within and around a small formerly agricultural village. There was little tourism in this region before. The decision for the site was influenced by the intact natural and cultural prerequisites (nearby Lake Fleesensee, much space for golf courses, historic castle), the location half way between the large cities Hamburg (about 1.7 million inhabitants) and Berlin (over 3 million inhabitants) and the high unemployment rate (over 30% in 1999) providing enough employees for the recent almost 500 working positions (Döbber-Rüther, 2008, p.15).
Today, the large-scale destination includes numerous offers. For accommodation, more than 2,000 bed places are offered in several types of accommodation: the “Radisson Resort Schloss Fleesensee” (five star castle hotel aiming at the up market private or business visitor), “Robinson Club Fleesensee” (club hotel for active couples and families), “Dorfhotel Fleesensee” (aiming at active families), and starting in 2009, “Iberotel” for singles and couples. All of the targeted groups are suppos edly situated financially above the average.

During leisure time various facilities such as the “Fleesensee Spa” are offering high quality beauty and spa treatments or the “Golf & Country Club Fleesensee” with totally 72-hole golf courses for beginners and experienced players are provided among other activities. The plans for a football academy are in the final stage. Fleesensee has numerous partners within the region, in order to complete their offers externally: horseback riding, bicycle rental, water activities, and different shopping offers are nearby or even on the grounds of the holiday park.

Land Fleesensee is the modern development of a multiple caring large-scale destination for different types of guests: Families, business meetings, office outings, Golf, health tourism among others. Steps for future additional diversification are already taken: offers for medical wellness guests, apartments for elderly and further activities are planned.

Fleesensee has shown that the modern mass market destination has to care for many different guest groups and has to offer a complete thematic arrangement of the destination. Even if not all activities are offered through the Fleesensee park itself, many are provided in cooperation with other partners nearby or even on the property of the park. The large-scale infrastructure is necessary in order to reach a critical size in which an economic success is provided.

Although the concept of “mass tourism” has a negative connotation amongst some travelers nowadays, in the case of Fleesensee it is economically successful. In order to fulfill the range of desires, a constant rejuvenation and adjustment of the product is necessary.

VII Conclusion

Mass tourism has developed in Germany from the 1960’s onwards. Resulting from this phenomenon, destinations of this type were developed on a large scale by the end of this decade. Mass market resorts have undergone substantial changes through the past two decades. They have become larger in size with an ever more complete offer. However, although generally the offers for “mass tourism” are not attractive for wealthier travelers, the industrialization of the tourism product “holiday park” seem to mean no obstacle but rather a guarantee for their success. Some of the original criteria for holiday parks remain: they are large establishments to use the advantages of size and generally, they offer self-catering in certain areas.

However, the destinations need to care for changing requisites: there is in general a shorter duration of stay (resulting in an increase of traffic in the region), a necessity for all-year indoor activities (high energy activities for the poor weather conditions in Germany) in order to attain a better occupancy rate, child
care programs need to be offered to enable parents to participate in offers, and other aspects.

Generally speaking, offers need to include unique selling propositions. The specialization of the destination is of less importance, since rather the variety of the offers count (like in Fleesensee with health offers, sports, offers for families and the elderly).

It could be proved that mass market destinations can be successfully adjusted or newly developed, if they are able to provide for all the needs of a modern tourist. As a result, the understanding of destination reduces in size. A tourist not leaving the destination increasingly uses the facilities of the holiday park. However, such a tourist is of less relevance for the receiving region.

In the case of holiday parks the concentration of the tourist activities within the destination leads to a better use of the value-added chain, leaving the negative aspects of tourism like the production of waste, the increase of traffic or the development of noise to the visited region. It remains worth discussing, whether the reduction of unemployment is enough to even out the negative aspects of such large-scale destinations.

Reference


ドイツにおける観光地の再定置：マス・マーケットの要求と高品質基準との問

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キーワード：観光目的地、マス・ツーリズム型観光地、観光地発達のモデル、再活性化

ドイツにおける18世紀初頭から現在の状況まで、ドイツ東部の海岸地域の観光及び健康目的の観光に特に焦点をあて、観光地の発展について検討する。

ドイツにおける最初の観光の形は、中世の巡礼及び温湯地訪問に始まる。しかし、18世紀後半から19世紀初頭かけて、上流階級及び知識階級の旅においてレジャー及び娯楽のための観光が始まっているのが見受けられる。これらは、まだ珍しく、特権階級に限られ、諸外国にとって目立った行動であった。同時に、ドイツにおいて健康目的の観光の開発が始まった。1793年には、Heiligendamm（ハイリゲンダン）でヨーロッパ海岸域の温泉が初めて発見され、当産業の数ある上昇の一つが始まった。続く次の世紀において、温泉水を訪れる人はまだ主に上流階級であり、温泉を訪れるのは主に社会的な理由によるもので、滞在は数週間にわたった。

20世紀になると、ドイツにおける観光は、社会のすべての階級の人たちに提供されるものに根本的に変化した。観光が初めてレクレーション及び教育の中にもみられるようになってきた。1930年代においては、国による社会のすべての階級の人たちが楽しめる観光の確実な推進が、マス・ツーリズムの最初の兆候をみせた。ドイツの海岸に沿って、それぞれ20,000床を有するよく似た観光地が5つ計画されたが、Ruegen島（リューゲン島）にあるProra（プローラ）だけが実現し、残りは第二次世界大戦勃発のため完成しなかった。

戦後、東西ドイツでは政治体制が異なったため、観光の発展は別々の道をたどった。ドイツ連邦共和国（西ドイツ）は北海及びバルト海の海岸線沿いの温泉や海に関する観光産業をさらに発展させた。西ドイツでは、すべての人々に対して一般に4週間継続する治療を施す社会システムが考案されたので、特に温泉地への訪問者数は大きな飛躍をみせた。西ドイツにおいて、約300の温泉地ができるという強力な発展を導いた。

ドイツ民主共和国（東ドイツ）においては、観光について確固たる組織的なシステムが形成された。1950年代の初めには、すべての観光施設は民営化された。この国が存在した40年間、観光は中央集権化され、質及び量ともに足りないというのが特徴であった。その結果として、一般的なインフラ及び特に温泉のインフラは1990年代の初めには劣悪な状態にあった。それ以来、特に海岸沿いの温泉にある古い施設及び施設の再開発のために莫大な努力と資金が投入された。今日では、『温泉建築』の文化遺産は特別保護されたものだと考えられており、後の世代のためにも保存の価値があると理解されている。社会主義時代後期の時期には、変化という一般的な問題とは別に、新たな問題の兆候が出てきている。すなわち、観光地発展のライフサイクル段階の一つとして引き起こされる停滞

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という一般的な兆候である。これは特に、Mecklenburg-Vorpommern（メクレンブルク＝フォーポ
メルン州）の海沿いの温泉における問題であり、それらは特に停滞する危険性が高いとされている
4つのタイプのうち2つ、つまり「海岸観光地」と「温泉」が組み合わさっていることによる。こ
れらの問題に対する新しい解決策を見つけなければならない。

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