A sustainable Recovery?
Thailand’s Tourism Industry in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004

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Zusammenfassung

Abstract
A growing amount of disaster- and crises situations emphasize increased vulnerability of tourism destinations in today’s times. Hereby, the aspect of a sustainable redevelopment plays a significant role, due to the fact that unstructured and hazardous tourism development facilitated the vulnerability of affected destinations, leading to an exacerbation of tsunami impacts, for example in the specific case of Thailand.

To what extend the recovery of the tourism destinations at the Andaman Coast was employed as a chance for a sustainable redevelopment is the major concern of this article.

In a methodological combination of field research and the analysis of expert interviews the research tries to evaluate to what extend the re-established tourism industry has stuck to the principles of sustainable development when rebuilding the destination.

In this context also the role of alternative forms of tourism such as CBT (Community-Based Tourism) were looked at.
1) Introduction
Before analyzing the scope and impacts of the disastrous crisis, some introductory facts about Thailand, as well as the relevance and development of local tourism structures will be briefly presented.

As the second largest economy in Southeast Asia, Thailand is broadly reliant on exports that account for more than 60 percent of the GDP which is approximately US$200 billion. Primarily, exports consist of agricultural products (11 percent of the GDP) such as fish and rice, where the country is the largest exporter worldwide; but also textiles, jewelry, rubber, automobiles, computers and other electronics and industries (45 percent of the GDP). Furthermore, the service industry and tourism are important foreign exchange earner. With over 14 million international visitor arrivals in 2009 (UNWTO 2010:10), the tourism industry provides seven percent of Thailand’s GDP (TAT 2010).

1.1 Importance and Relevance of Tourism
For the past three to four decades Thailand experienced a rapidly growing number of international tourist arrivals accompanied by planning and development of tourism related infrastructure, facilities and amenities in order to suit the growing number of visitors. While in 1980 about 1.9 million tourists visited the country; the numbers of international arrivals now exceed 14 million (UNWTO 2010:10; Dobias 1989:43). In 1988 tourism generated 4.5 percent of direct industry employment, while in 2002 the highest share of 5.7 percent direct industry employment (with 1.9 million jobs generated by the travel and tourism direct industry GDP) was reached, measuring the value added by traditional travel and tourism industries excluding any indirect effects created by the supply chain and all tourism related investments, spending or export (WTTC 2010). Moreover, with its increasing numbers of international and domestic tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts of US$15.9 billion in 2009 (UNWTO 2010:10-11); the tourism industry accounts for high economic importance for the country. The following chart reflects the trend of Thailand’s international visitor arrivals between 1988 and 2010, referring to all non-resident visitors including overnight, same-day and cruise passengers staying on ships in ports overnight (WTTC 2010).

In the case of Thailand, tourism is a high contributor to exports and the GDP, which in return attracts foreign investments to the sector and country (Jantarat & Williams 2000:123). Additionally, the high number of international tourist arrivals account for high foreign exchange revenues. Some coastal destinations and islands even

![Fig. 1: International Visitor Arrivals 1988-2010](Source: Own Illustration based on data of WTTC, 2010)
depend on tourism as principal employer. Despite the creation of economic benefits, potential issues and problems emerge, such as the loss of traditional jobs in agriculture and fisheries, the destruction of traditional social structures, and pollution since the expansion of infrastructure cannot keep up with the growing population. Due to the aspect of dependency, local communities might face economic and financial ruin once tourist numbers diminish. Consequently, factors that disrupt the tourism industry or influence tourism flows are concerned with trends resembling population changes, crises of any kind, diverse disasters e.g. long-term natural climate change, and the change in structure of government, social organization or economy (Prideaux, Laws & Faulkner 2007:358-359).

The fact that tourism is a strongly integrated concept that plays an essential role for Thailand is accentuated by the fast development of tourism destinations along the coastline of the Malaysian peninsula (Khao Lak, Krabi, Surat Thani), its surrounding islands (Koh Samui, Koh Phi Phi, and Phuket), and emphasized by the increased number of international tourist arrivals for the past decades. The creation of positive or negative effects can be seen as a question of structured and controlled tourism planning and development. Though tourism is a significant contributor to the local and national economy of Thailand, its success is indicated by the way people perceive the impact on their livelihoods (Shamsub 2010:212). Finally, irresponsible and uncontrolled tourism development may be responsible for extensive social and environmental damage, while economic gains are not always assured. Consequently, the intent should be to maximize the positive benefits of tourism development while minimizing negative impacts in a sustainable manner (Smith 2000:105).

1.2 The Indian Ocean Tsunami and its Effects on the Destination

1.2.1 Essential Facts of the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004

After elaborating the role of tourism for Thailand, the focus of attention will now be shifted to the crisis caused by the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004. In this context, the previously mentioned concept of tourism development of Thailand’s coastal destination is closely linked to the destruction caused by the tsunami. Before elaborating this aspect in more detail, central facts and figures concerning the tsunami will be presented.

In general, the term ‘tsunami’ derives from the Japanese word for ‘harbor (tsun) wave (ami)’ (Bryant 2008:3; Dudley/Lee 1998:51; Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission 2008:6), and is defined as “a series of waves of extremely long wave length and long period, generated in a body of water by an impulsive disturbance that displaces the water such as an earthquake, landslide, or submarine volcanic eruption” (Pacific Disaster Center 2010). As particular characteristic, a tsunami is less than a few centimeters high in the open ocean; while travelling up to 800km/h the wave energy extends from the surface to the ocean floor. “As the tsunami approaches the coastline, the wave energy is compressed into a much shorter distance, creating potentially large destructive waves posing a threat to life in coastal communities” (NOAA 2010a). In the particular case of
the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004, the hazard is affiliated to an earthquake of the magnitude 9.4 Mw occurring off the northwest coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. As the largest earthquake since 1964 (Alaska), it generated a tsunami responsible for more casualties than any other historically recorded (NOAA 2010b). Due to the fact that the tsunami was triggered as a result of an earthquake, it can also be referred to as a secondary hazard (Sundar & Sezhiyan 2007:6).

1.2.2 Chronology of Events and Magnitude of Destruction

The tsunami evoked by the earthquake on December 26 2004 is remembered as one of the most destructive natural disasters in recent history, causing incalculable distress and long-term repercussions for affected communities and countries.

Statistics emphasize an overall death toll exceeding 281,895 casualties, 189,536 people who were injured, and over 1.2 million homeless within affected regions (ADPC 2006:6). The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC 2005:53) highlights that in 2004 the disaster accounted for nearly 96 percent of the total human loss in affected Asian countries, as well as 12 percent of Asia’s total economic damages. Hereby, significant damage regarding human and economic losses was recorded for Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Myanmar, Maldives and Bangladesh.

In Thailand, the tsunami severely impacted six coastal provinces, namely Ranong, Phuket, Krabi, Trang, Satun, and Phang Nga which was the most heavily affected area along the Andaman Coast (DDPM 2005:1). The impacts of the tsunami are described by the UN as “the worst natural disaster to ever strike Thailand, causing loss of life as well as major damage to property, the environment and the economy” (United Nations Thailand 2008). To further emphasize the destructive magnitude and scope of the natural disaster caused by the tsunami, the following table reflects the impacts and consequences of the tsunami as of September 7, 2005.

Accompanied by the tremendous amount of casualties and deaths, caused by drowning, trauma in turbulent waves, water pressure and floating debris such as collapsed building components or cars (Saatcioglu 2009:163; Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission 2008:1); the tsunami created severely distressing short- and long-term consequences for affected communities, the environment, and finally the economy of Thailand. Moreover, the “severe impact on the na-

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<th></th>
<th>No. people killed</th>
<th>No. people missing</th>
<th>Bodies still unidentified</th>
<th>No. of affected people</th>
<th>Lost livelihoods in fisheries</th>
<th>Lost livelihoods in tourism</th>
<th>Houses destroyed or badly damaged</th>
<th>Estimated value of damages</th>
<th>Thai Government assistance/ compensation (as of 01 September 2005)</th>
<th>Relief Fund for Disaster Victims</th>
<th>UN emergency phase relief assistance</th>
<th>UN recovery programming (until mid 2006)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>5,395</td>
<td>2,817</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td>58,550</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>120,000+</td>
<td>4,806</td>
<td>363.4 million USD (not. including housing)</td>
<td>1.06 billion USD (including budget contributions, Prime Minister’s Office, bank credit)</td>
<td>31.75 million USD</td>
<td>2.6 million USD</td>
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Source: United Nations Thailand, 2008. (Recorded numbers may vary depending on the data source)
tural environment in turn had serious consequences on the fishing and tourism industries and thus, thousands of families’ livelihoods” (*United Nations Thailand 2008*). According to *UNEP* (2005:38), the fact that the level of devastation within affected provinces varies significantly is based on the dependency of natural parameters (bathymetry, elevation and presence of natural barriers), and importantly man-made factors including coastal land use and urban development. Therefore, the correlation between coastal zone development and the impact of the tsunami will be explained hereafter.

### 1.2.3 Causes of Devastation and the Role of Tourism

In the process of post-tsunami recovery, various organizations and institutions tried to assess the causes for the destructive damages along the Andaman Coast. Interestingly, it is indicated that “the vulnerability of the Andaman Coast, in particular in Phang Nga, Phuket and Krabi provinces, to natural disasters is clearly linked to land use and coastal development planning” (*UNEP* 2005:53).

In this respect, Mathew and McKeown (2010:8) critically argued that “[t]he tourism industry, in its widest sense […] played a significant role in the development that increased the destruction caused”. In order to assess this statement it is imperative to analyze the measures taken regarding tourism development. Notwithstanding the fact that coastal zone management was attempted in the 1980’s by establishing a Coastal Development Division under the Department of Land Development, the objective of providing ‘guidelines for coastal development based on soil characteristics’ could not be achieved due to lack of guidance on how to integrate the work of the divisions with further government agencies; finally resulting in the closure of the division. As a consequence to this failed attempt, little attention was brought towards an integrated coastal zone management (*UNEP* 2005:51-53). In this respect, it is further indicated that the natural buffer zone of mangrove forests, trees and shrubs living in tropical tidal zones, vanished for countless hotels and shrimp farms, while sand dunes have been flattened for coastal highways and “reefs blow up to make way for ports” (*Browne* 2004:5). Aside from that, a correlation is recognized between the presence of mangrove forests and the magnitude of destruction caused by the tsunami waves proceeding inland. In this context, mangroves are known to be a defensive measure, protecting coastal populations by reducing energy of tidal waves. To a certain degree, the reason for mangrove deforestation can be correlated to the coastal development which was primarily focused on tourism development within tsunami affected areas (*UNEP* 2005:44).

With this in mind, it is reasonable to question whether poor environmental management and excessive urban planning contributed to the devastation caused by the tsunami, despite an Environmental Quality Act (1975) and a more precise Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act in 1992 (*Schroeder & Yocum* 2006:111). The role of tourism in this context should not be neglected, as “concentration of [tourism] development in one place over a short period of time had many serious negative impacts [such as] loss of trees and devastation of terrestrial wildlife” (*Smith* 2000:104). Subsequently, to a certain degree unplanned and unstructured (mass) tourism development can be held responsible for causing environmental damages, which in return create vulne-
rable and disaster-prone coastal areas. As critics condemn the tourism industry as an exploiter of nature; the restructuring of land and natural habitats in order to install tourism amenities and infrastructure, indeed increases the possibility of erosion, flooding and landslides (Henderson 2007:88-89). This becomes evident during the analysis of tourism development on the island of Phuket.

While littoral forests i.e. mangroves, sand dunes, coastal wetlands and reef systems can provide natural barriers against the effects of storms and tsunamis on human life; by December 2004 Phuket experienced 90 percent of deforestation of mangroves due to uncontrolled and sometimes even corrupt tourism development. Similarly, other parts of the Andaman Coast were affected in order to provide access to beaches, sea view or land to build on. Consequently, if mangroves and sand dunes had still been in place as a natural buffer zone, it is likely that damage would have been reduced (Mathew & McKeown 2010:10). As most affected province, Phang Nga experienced great destruction in touristic areas, where mangroves were absent, while in the north and south of the region the presence of large mangrove forests “significantly mitigated the impact of the tsunami” (UNEP 2005:45).

Finally, the assumption that “the tsunami reached such a disastrous magnitude due to massive encroachments on the natural environment” (Vorlaufer 2005:63) can be validated; especially taken into consideration that “there is a growing consensus among scientist, environmentalists and Asian fishing communities that the impact was considerably worsened by tourists, shrimp farming and other industrial developments which have destroyed or degraded mangrove forests and other natural sea defences” (Vidal 2005). Evidently, it is essential that overall tourism planning should therefore entail a plan of how to use resources in a wise and efficient manner (Jenkins 1991 cited in Mason 2008:95); while disaster risk reduction is crucial for a sustainable development (Lebel, Manuta & Garden 2010:12).

1.3 Effects of the Tsunami

Initially, it could be determined that tourism is an important contributor to the economy, while unstructured and uncontrolled development in coastal areas exacerbated the impacts of the tsunami. Subsequently, it became evident that the tsunami caused a disaster for local communities, economy and environment on the one hand; while simultaneously a crisis for local tourism destinations and involved stakeholders emerged. Hereby, a clear distinction between crisis and disaster is unachievable since the impacts on different spheres of action of the crisis are closely related to the repercussions caused by the disaster. The following figure 2 summarizes the impacts of the tsunami under the aspect of a natural disaster and tourism crisis. Though the aspects are presented individually, an overlapping in response and recovery activities and actions taken seem unavoidable. In fact, Robertson et al. (2006:17) state that tourism organizations are “part of the disaster management community and should function within the established, coordinated and integrated system”. Moreover, the role of tourism in a crisis situation is to partner with government and community agencies in order to develop coordinated disaster management plans and systems; while it is important to “develop plans and procedures appropriate to a destination” (ibid.).
Consequently, it can be summarized that disasters and crises share coherent and associated aspects, despite the fact that they might impact diverse spheres of action and slightly differ in focus of actions taken. Although natural disasters of such magnitude are unavoidable and destinations are not immune to such events, tourism organizations and destinations are able to devise means for minimizing the damage and accelerate the disaster recovery (Faulkner 2003:173). Although this article is primarily focused on crisis management, aspects of disaster management also need to be taken into consideration due to the fact that tourism is an integral aspect of affected communities, and the recovery of affected destinations should be understood as an integrated process.

Fig. 2: *Tsunami Impacts and Repercussions - Detailed Overview*
2 Evaluation of Long-Term Crisis Recovery Consequences and Lessons Learned for Thailand’s Destinations at the Andaman Coast

As previously elaborated, the aspect of sustainable redevelopment is crucial in order to prevent future natural disasters in recuperated destinations. In this respect, it should be analyzed to what extend initiatives and proclamations were actually implemented and enforced in the post-tsunami recovery process. Aside from the overall goal of the industry to regain visitor’s confidence and their fast return, many organizations such as UNEP or ECOT realized that “there is a risk that a fast track recovery of the tourism industry may lead to a rapid rebuilding of the infrastructure that existed before the disaster. [Consequently,] such an approach would pre-empt an integrated coastal zone management plan which is now absolutely necessary to reduce human vulnerability to natural disasters and ensure long-term sustainability” (UNEP 2005:53).

In order to appraise the principle question if the recovery was actually used as an opportunity towards a sustainable redevelopment, a survey was conducted, entailing 15 qualitative interviews directed at experts and representatives of involved organizations and institutions on various levels, including NGOs, civil society organizations, tourism industry associations, tour operators, affected tourists as well as providers of local tourism products or destination services. By conducting guided expert interviews, the author targeted at a profound analysis of the recovery strategy and implementation of sustainable measures six years after the tsunami. Another goal was to identify aspects of the recovery process that were unconstructive, respectively determining potential lessons (not) learned for affected destinations. In the following, primary results of the survey will be presented. Concurrently, it should be emphasized that the survey results exclusively represent the experiences and estimations of interviewed experts, and might therefore not be entirely representative on a large scale. Nevertheless, the results reflect a certain trend that can be validated due to reason of high expertise and profound issue-related knowledge of the respective interviewee.

2.1 Analysis of Destination Recovery Status according to dimensions

A primary question asked for the reflection of the recovery of Thailand’s tourism destinations after the crisis in terms of economy, environment and social aspects.

Overall the economic sector has been validated as the segment that experienced the fastest and most successful rehabilitation. In this respect, it should be stressed that there still is raised concern in regards to the contemporary political instabilities, which still remains unresolved. As a consequence, this puts a threat towards Thailand’s tourism, and could potentially lead to the case that tourists prefer other destinations or countries (Kaleva 2010).

In respect to the impacts of the tsunami on the ecosystems of the Andaman Coast, Jim Enright (2010) Asia Coordinator of the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) elaborates that the ecological damage prior to the tsunami was most-
ly caused by human induced impacts such as unregulated tourism pressures, coastal development or overfishing. Consequently, the emerging negative consequences have been considered as much greater than the impact of the tsunami itself. As a matter of fact, the force of the tsunami on the coral reefs and mangroves was not significant and would heal itself, if the human use would be reduced or stopped.

*Fig. 3: Recovery Evaluation*

![Recovery Evaluation](source)

Finally, the dimension ‘social structures’ has been assessed very differently. Evidently, it is not per se definable to what extend all communities have recovered after crisis, due to the fact that each province developed differently and thus provides dissimilar opportunities for social structure recovery. One aspect that revealed during interview analysis is concerned with adverse effects, unintentionally created in the post tsunami recovery process. Accordingly, the money and supplies provided for communities in the instance of post-tsunami aid led to increased competition, greed and conflicts among communities. This is based on the fact that there were no coherent provisions and regulations of compensation paid to rebuild, as NGO’s and governments provided different amounts of compensations; while concurrently the distribution of supplies is criticized for not being conducted according to the basis of needs. Thus, it was reported that some fisher villages received 10 boats even though they only needed one, while other villages received less boats than they essentially required. Matzig (2010) further stresses that “[m]any aid projects totally wasted funds as they built houses in places where nobody wanted to live”. Consequently, this issue has not been sufficiently addressed.

### 2.2 Evaluation of the Evidence of Sustainable Redevelopment

Based on the fact that the crisis provided the opportunity to enhance tourism development, considering previous mistakes in terms of unplanned coastal zoning;
it should be evaluated if there is evidence of a sustainable redevelopment of (tourism) structures in affected destinations. In this instance, the respondents were asked to comment on the respective question, reflecting the following results: Interestingly, the majority of interviewees highlighted that attempts towards increased sustainability were evident, entailing regulations, reconstruction of master plans and risk assessment plans; while it is highly questionable whether these guidelines and standards have been realized due to the absence of profound evidence regarding implementation. In fact, although there had been efforts and attempts towards enhanced sustainability as people became more aware of ecological aspects; the survey results revealed that a large-scale implementation failed, leading to missed opportunities within the redevelopment process. More in detail, it can be summarized that social oriented NGOs and local destination services reflected a rather negative result opposed to internationally positioned tour operators and organizations. The reason for this phenomenon is based on the fact that local NGOs are directly engaged with the local communities, usually over a certain period of time, while the tourism industry is primarily concerned with a fast reconstruction in order to guarantee the rapid provision of tourism facilities and business processes.

Major obstacles and challenges that detained a sustainable development are summarized in the following:

1. **Greed for money** – In this instance, it is mentioned that (foreign) investors abuse the situation in terms of taking land to rebuild or establish physical infrastructure regardless of sustainable zoning plans or laws. Further it is stated that the implementation of sustainable standards is often associated with higher costs and spending, and therefore neglected according to the statement ‘Sustainability? Not if there is a cost’ (Gray 2010)

2. Another obstacle is concerned with **poor management of the (local) government** to implement respective programs, initiatives and plans regarding sustainability. Thus, it is reflected that the government does not have or follow a master plan of sustainability, lacks understanding, and acts poorly in terms of controlling investments and big businesses in vulnerable areas. Furthermore, it is criticized that the government’s primarily focus was directed towards promotion and a fast recovery of the tourism industry, paying only little attention to the vulnerability of destinations and the need to implement sustainable measures.

3. **Economics had higher priority** – the opportunity for higher importance on sustainability was missed since there was much more emphasis on a rapid recovery targeting ‘business as usual’ instead of using the chance for proper planning, preparations, and disaster prevention.

![Fig. 4: Degree of sustainable Recovery](source: Own Data)
4. Cultural aspects – tourism is understood differently by various stakeholders in terms of culture and preservation of local resources such as education and rituals. Hereby, it should be understood that the cultural treasures need to be preserved and strengthened through power sharing between tourism and local communities that also benefit (Sabur 2010). Consequently, a more sustainable approach would include the integration of community control and participation (Suansri 2010). In this respect, another challenge is constituted within the culture and mentality of many people in Thailand. Accordingly, despite the goodwill, the ‘mai pen rai’ (Don’t worry) philosophy takes over in the long run, leading to neglecting or even disobeying sustainable rules or laws for economic profits (Matzig 2010).

2.3 Overall Recovery Assessment and Lessons (not) Learned

Finally, the survey requested information regarding the following subject: “Based on the situation before the tsunami, how would you assess the recovery of Thailand’s tourism destinations overall?” The principle goal was to filter a trend by taking all different aspects into consideration, and provide a broad picture on the overall recovery evaluation.

While four interviewees were undecided or not in the position to answer the survey question, the majority of respondents stated that the overall recovery is perceived as very successful or successful. The general positive tendency of the findings is further reflected in the fact that the tourism sector and the economy managed to recover relatively quickly. While on January 2nd 2005 a total of 73.96 percent of hotels were still in operation (TAT 2005d), recovery efforts were focused on redeveloping the tourism structures in a swift manner, not leaving any evidence of a natural disaster behind. In comparison to other affected countries such as India where people are still living in shelters, Thailand recovered very successful as housing and basic needs were provided relatively quickly (Enright 2010). According to Bert Van Walbeek (2010), Thailand received a great amount of international help, funding and attention based on aspects of popularity. Phuket for instance is widely known by the general public, whereas Aceh (Indonesia) is rather unknown. Therefore, the prominence of the Thai destinations created a ‘could have been me- effect’, causing an overreaction of attention. Consequently, the tourism sector could recover quickly and successful, also because of incoming funding from investors and the private sector, which even exceeded money spent by the government. Evidently, Thailand was very successful in rehabilitating the tourism sector and respective physical infrastructure. Simulta-

![Fig. 5: Overall Assessment of Destination Recovery](source: Own Data)
neously, it can be argued that there was a failure to ‘build back better’ due to continuous over-dependency on tourism. Despite the tourism recovery success, negative side effects impacted local communities, as they still have not fully recovered (Minninger 2010). Thus, it is commented that the fast return of high numbers of tourists and increasing construction weakened social aspects and caused the disappearance of a sense of unity, leading to the exacerbation of conflicts in the rebuilding process (Tangsurakit 2010).

In close relation to the previous question, the survey requested the interviewees to determine lessons (not) learned from the post tsunami recovery. The analysis of the expert interviews indicates that there are several decisive issues that appear to constitute important lessons learned in the post tsunami process:

1. Chaotic situations and mismanagement in the tsunami aftermath provided an intensified need for a holistic approach and improved coordination among involved agencies in situations of crisis or disaster. Thus, it is stated that the government should take a leading role in coordinating and managing such situations (Roy 2010).

2. Another central lesson learned is the intensified need for improved collaboration and coordination, transferred to the consultation with local people. Thus, 33.3 percent of respondents indicate the requirement for enhanced community involvement and participation since they were not involved in decision making after the tsunami. Consequently, suggestions for improvements entail a holistic approach of knowledge and power sharing, as well as greater community participation and prioritization of their requirements over the needs of investors (Suansri 2010).

3. Moreover, it has been criticized that funding was used in order to promote tourism, instead of restoring ecosystems. One example is provided by the fact that almost 1 million THB were spend on hiring Thai celebrities and music stars in order to promote domestic tourism, although studies provide scientific proof of the importance of mangrove restoration in the post-tsunami recovery. In this respect there should be a lesson learned for the increasing importance of ecological rehabilitation instead of marketing.

4. The final lesson learned is constituted with knowledge and understanding. Moreover, there should be the intention to help local people and communities to be self-reliant as they learn to understand consequences (Sabur 2010).

2.4 Summary of survey results

Detailed analysis of survey results reveal that the economic recovery went relatively quickly, while the environment and social structures have not sufficiently recuperated. Overall key findings reflect that the crisis was not sufficiently used as a chance towards a sustainable redevelopment of tourism structures. Despite numerous profound and well-conceived plans, projects and strategies, there was a lack of sufficient implementation and absence of continued consideration of sustainable standards. Principle obstacles entailed greed, poor planning and management, as well as the fact that economic factors received higher priority. In comparison to other tsunami affected countries, the overall rehabilitation has been evaluated as successful due to the fact that the tourism sector and infra-
structure was rebuilt quickly. Simultaneously, lessons learned emphasize the need for intensified coordination and collaboration among affected organizations in disastrous situations. Further, there is an imperative need for local communities to receive enhanced integration in terms of involvement and participation. Finally, the hypothesis “Tourism after the tsunami equals tourism before the tsunami” (EED 2005) creates divergent opinions among interviewees as there is evidence for slight positive changes such as increasing risk awareness and the emergence of Community-based Tourism (CBT); while concurrently, the implementation of sustainable standards is not sufficiently detectable. This perception is proven by the fact that hotels and resorts are still being built on beachfront areas, implying that the unstructured tourism development increases the vulnerability of coastal destinations. Consequently, lessons learned from the crisis do not seem to influence this hazard-prone development.

3. Thailand’s Tourism Scenario in the Aftermath of the Tsunami

As a final aspect, two case studies will be presented in order to reflect Thailand’s tourism scenario in the aftermath of the tsunami. In this respect it should be assessed if and to what extent the lessons learned on sustainability have been implemented, while referring to potential improvements of crisis- and disaster preparedness. The two cases reflect the post-tsunami development of Phi Phi Island, a destination experiencing intensive tourism density; as well as Phra Thong Island where local villagers engaged in community-based tourism (CBT). Although these destinations cannot be accurately compared since they are based on divergent criteria and rather imply two poles of the tourism range, central findings of the present situation of tourism development in Thailand should be reflected at this point.

3.1 Mass Tourism on Phi Phi Island

Koh Phi Phi is an island group encompassing six small islands, located between Phuket and the Krabi province. Despite the fact that the island group was preserved as a National Park where construction of buildings was considered illegal, the largest island Phi Phi Don has developed to become a famous tourist destination in the mid 1990’s, still receiving numerous excursion ships and speed cruisers with hundreds, sometimes even over thousand tourists at least twice a day. A great amount of prominence was reached after the movie ‘The Beach’ was filmed at famous Maya Bay on the smaller island Phi Phi Le.

Although Phi Phi Island was officially declared a national park prior to the tsunami, many hotels and bungalows were build in the Ton Sai village on the small isthmus of the island, in order to accommodate the raising number of tourists, reaching a total of 4.000 hotel and bungalow rooms before the tsunami crisis (UN-WTO 2005:7). The 2004 tsunami had severe impacts on the island, its residents and visitors. As of January 2005 official numbers indicate that over 753 people lost their lives, with over 1.000 people still missing at that time (Friese & Selau 2006:2). Furthermore, extensive damage to the build beachfront properties
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and environment was re-reported. Due to the help of hundreds of volunteers, the island could be restored relatively quickly. In this respect, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) advertised that by the end of January 2005 “all tourist accommodations on the east coast of Phi Phi Don […] were open for business [while] ferries to Phi Phi Don from Krabi and Phuket are in operation once again” (Cummings 2005).

Interestingly, by raising the concern of preserving Phi Phi as a national park in the aftermath of the tsunami, the local government reacted by reducing the national park area of the island, so structures could be build legally, causing extremely high density (Gray 2010). Rice and Haynes (2005:9) further argue that much of the building on Koh Phi Phi is still illegal, since laws on buffer zones and building regulations have been ignored, just as they have been prior to the tsunami. In this respect, there has been an attempt to rehabilitate the island by implementing a structured development plan, submitted by the Department of Public Works and Town and Country Planning, which entailed re-zoning and re-planning of beach areas to ensure disaster preparedness (Friese & Selau 2006:2). The failure of implementing this plan becomes evidend by the real picture of Phi Phi Island today, characterized by numerous speed boats carrying hundreds of tourists daily. The small island village even counts several groceries stores and ATMs. Restaurants offer a great variety of international cuisine while bars excessively promote alcohol consumption with offers such as ‘buy one bucket, get two free’. Despite preconceived zoning regulations, countless bars align on the beach front, offering services until the early morning hours. A personal interview with Tony Nang (2010) a restaurant owner on the island, revealed that there have been slight changes to the pre-tsunami situation, as now predominantly young tourists visit the island, opposed to families with children. Moreover, he argues that tourists are important for Phi Phi as a source of income, while concurrently he emphasized that the increased number of tourists is much more that the island can handle, leading to continuous building of more accommodation facilities. Another issue could be raises on behalf of the 600 Muslim residents, many of them selling food or clothes on the local market; while they encounter alcohol, drugs, music and tourists lightly dressed in swimsuits.

Evidently, the present situation of Phi Phi Island accentuates a poor implementation of targeted development plans, which could have ensured sustainable measures to correct destructive mistakes from the past. As a tool of sustainability, areas of land can be designated as a national park or other categories. But the example
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of Phi Phi Island emphasizes that the assumption is questionable since “some governments […] have designated large areas of land as national parks or wildlife reserves but have failed to provide the resources required to afford appropriate level of protection on the ground” (Mowforth&Munt 1998:115). Thus, it can be concluded that for the destination of Koh Phi Phi lessons on sustainable redevelopment and disaster preparedness have not been learned efficiently, as uncontrolled development and tourism density even surpass the pre-tsunami conditions due to the predominance of influential key investors and the priority of commercial interests.

3.2 Community Based Tourism on Koh Phra Thong

In contrast to the case of Phi Phi Island, the author would like to introduce the model of community-based tourism (CBT) at the Ban Lion (Lion Village) on Phra Thong Island, as a best practice example of a sustainable rehabilitation in several aspects.

Located in Phang Nga province, Phra Thong Island is positioned in the Andaman Sea, near Khuraburi, approximately 100 km north of Phuket. Covering 114 km², the island contains mangroves, savannah, swamp forests and coral reefs. As the tsunami heavily impacted the undeveloped island, the 200 inhabitants suffered severe damages of houses and fishing boats, while 75 people were reported dead (Sakboon 2005; Quarto & Enright 2009:34). As the worse affected village of the three island settlements, the fishing and seaside Ban (village) Pak Chok was flattened with its 85 houses (Sakboon 2005). In response to the replacements of the tsunami victims, the International Lions Club Foundation and other benefactors funded the rebuilding of the village in 2006, which was now replaced by Ban Lion, located at the northern tip of the island (Andaman Coast Community Tourism 2011; Koh Phra Thong Community Tourism 2011). The community entails over 40 households with 126 members brought together in the aftermath of the tsunami, including people from diverse cultural backgrounds such as Moken, Thai, Chinese, and Burmese (Quarto & Enright 2009:34). Since the majority of villagers highly depend on fishing, the community saw the opportunity of engaging in community-based tourism (CBT), in order to generate additional income. In this respect, the Mangrove Action Project (MAP), in partnership with the Italian conservation organization Naucrates initiated a project on local capacity building on CBT and community-based coastal resources management on the island in 2008 (MAP 2008). Within the conception of tsunami recovery, Ban Lion further experienced support from Bodhi Garrett, who founded the North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR), in order to support local communities in the Phang Nga area, after loosing his house to the tsunami (NATR 2011).

In general, community-based tourism found its inception during the ear-
ly 1990s as an increasing number of Thai communities developed programs to improve the situation of rural tourism. Overall objectives are concerned with the affirmation of local cultures, celebrating cultural diversity as well as cross-cultural learning and respect. In this instance, “managing and operating CBT helps local people to develop new skills and knowledge which can assist them to communicate and to advocate effectively in support of their traditional cultures and way of life” (Richards 2009:12). Thus, CBT can be described as a type of alternative ecotourism where tourists respectfully participate in, support and experience the daily life of local people, while both actively learn about cultural differences (Suansri 2010). As a form of sustainable tourism, CBT can further produce societal benefits such as conveying a sense of pride, while encouraging entrepreneurial spirit, preserving cultural assets, and providing educational benefits (Edgell et al. 2008:131-132). Consequently, CBT provides an alternative model of tourism that entails fewer negative impacts and more opportunities to create benefits for local inhabitants and environment (Richards 2009:12). In respect to CBT Thammanoon Kerdjaroen (2010), head of the local guide team and assistant coordinator of the CBT team of the village, accentuates that the local tourism provides a good chance for generating income aside from fishing since competition increases due to commercial fishing. Further, CBT enables the women of the community to create skills for arts and crafts such as tie-dying or hand bag making. A potential threat arises from the competition against other CBT villages, or influential people that abuse the concept by taking tourists to the island, conducting jungle treks to the savannah without sharing the benefits with the local community.

Simultaneously, the implementation of CBT provides certain difficulties such as cultural divergences and requires a well planned and prepared development. Respectively, Garrett (2010) identified specific key factors that should be taken into consideration for a successful implementation of CBT:

- Community wide understanding and benefit (financial transparency and regular meetings)
- Ongoing product development and trainings to foster confidence and skills
- Insurance of mechanics for respectful exchange (e.g. code of conduct)
- Investments in marketing and promotion (with the help of supporting organizations)

Furthermore, Potjana Suansri (2010), project manager of the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) accentuates, that ongoing control, knowledge enhancement and development, as well as continual relationships are essential elements of the success for community-based tourism.

To finalize this chapter, it can summarized that post tsunami emergence of community-based tourism at the Andaman Coast provides a great opportunity for local communities and their members to benefit directly from positive tourism impacts in a sustainable manner. Simultaneously, it should be considered that potential negative impacts may arise if CBT is not properly planned or does not involve the full community. Regardless of potential challenges, the fact that over the past 15 years, more than 80 Thai communities have worked on developing community-based tourism to provide tourists with the opportunity to experience and learn about local culture and nature (CBT-I 2011) emphasizes the increasing aware-
ness and interest of sustainable tourist development, contributing to the empowerment of local and environmental conservation. Consequently, the model of CBT can be viewed as a best practice example of sustainable tourism development after the Indian Ocean tsunami 2004, learning the lesson that another tourism is possible. The following table summarizes benefits and potential disadvantages of CBT:

**Tab. 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Community Based Tourism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generates supplementary income which directly benefits the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps indigenous culture alive, passes on traditional skills and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps foster awareness on environmental protection and conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural exchange and learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contributions: development of human resource and skills, involvement of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters community strength and pride, unity and empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases disaster awareness and reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture clashes or divergent perceptions between locals and incoming tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skepticism and loss of unity if not all community members agree on issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exacerbation of existing conflicts within the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic expectations on either side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High competition if too many CBT communities exist in one area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential risk of becoming overly dependent on tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own Illustration

4. Summary/closing results and conceptions

In the process of analyzing the significance of tourism for Thailand, it becomes evident that the local travel industry is of high relevance in terms of economic contribution. Simultaneously it was identified that unstructured and uncontrolled tourism development over the past decades extensively contributed to environmental degradation, which further facilitated the vulnerability of coastal areas over the past decades. In more detail, it is emphasized by Kuenzi & McNeely (2008:163) that “[u]nplanned development of tourism infrastructure and facilities in an area - that is developed without management standards and guidelines ensuring participation of local communities in both conservation and revenue from tourism – often results in significant alteration of ecosystems”. In this instance, another risk is constituted in the fact that “too often government efforts to increase tourist revenue are not matched by improvements in the facilities and infrastructure to support increased numbers of visitors and to facilitate sustainable tourism” (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2008:22). In fact, this has widely been the case for tourism destinations at the coasts of Thailand, while there is proof that weaknesses of proper tourism planning and the tendency to exploit natural resources intensify a degradation of the tourism product in the long term (UN-WTO 2005:117). With this in mind, research demonstrates that the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004 severely impacted the coastal communities and destinations at
Thailand’s Tourism Industry in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004

the Andaman Coast. While it was identified that the destruction exacerbated in areas were intact ecosystems and mangroves were not present due to urban planning and tourism development; the disaster entailed destructive repercussions for communities, the environment and economy, while concurrently a crisis emerged that affected the local tourism industry.

The industry and local tourism authorities reacted quickly in establishing marketing and promotional offers that primarily focused on restoring visitor’s confidence. Despite the goodwill, this approach has been criticized due to the fact that in some cases affected destinations and communities might not have been ready to receive tourists in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. Respectively, "[t]he government, business and donor driven scramble to restore tourism infrastructure as quickly as possible in order to recommence the inflow of tourist dollars and resume returns on capital investment has largely eliminated the opportunity to reflect on the kinds of tourism development that would be the most appropriate for a sustainable and equitable future which maximizes local benefits and minimized local costs" (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2008:33). Concurrently, the need for a sustainable redevelopment was emphasized from various organizations on the international and national level, albeit a clear implementation and realization of these goals is not satisfactorily proven.

Key findings of the survey conducted entailed that economic aspects dominated over the need for a sustainable redevelopment and the implementation of respective guidelines. Furthermore, in became evident that several issues in regards to community participation and livelihood rehabilitation were still present, while the travel and tourism sector experienced a relatively fast and very successful crisis recovery, partially even surpassing the pre-tsunami conditions. Another survey result emphasized the need for enhanced collaboration on various levels in times of crisis and disaster, as well as intensified integration and participation of local communities as they have not sufficiently recuperated. Finally, the research concluded by reflecting findings on the current tourism scenario in the aftermath of the tsunami. Hereby the divergent cases of Phi Phi Island and Koh Phra Thong were presented. As a result, the example of Koh Phi Phi demonstrated that the absence of implemented sustainable standards in reference to coastal tourism development is still present; while optimistically the emergence of community-based tourism (CBT) provides a best practice example of a sustainable tourism development where communities directly profit from positive impacts of tourism.

Finally, research, survey results and the current tourism scenario (Phi Phi Island) accentuate that the touristic re-orientation towards ecology and social standards is not satisfactorily detectable, leading to the conclusion that commercial interests of key investors and other stakeholders still predominate. Although there have been positive developments such as the emergency of CBT and an increased knowledge concerning tsunamis and sustainability, long-term implementations of these standards are still deficient and could be strongly improved in vulnerable coastal destinations.
As a final point, this article should conclude with the recommendation of Smith (2000:105) who accentuates that „[t]ourism planning should result in sustainable tourism development that satisfactorily fulfils most objectives to a high degree and does not disadvantage communities or degrade resources. In short, tourism planning seeks to enable sustainable tourism development”.

Bibliography


