

## Media release

### Sustainable tourism as an interesting market niche

**Holidaymakers generally favour the idea of sustainable travel, but are not willing to pay significantly more for a “sustainable” holiday. This finding was confirmed in a study conducted by the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts in preparation for the World Tourism Forum Lucerne 2011. The study is based on the responses of nearly 5,000 Swiss customers of the travel operator Kuoni.**

Lucerne, 14 April 2011 – The buzzword “sustainability” has been much discussed by the tourism industry of late and raises a number of questions. In preparation for the Forum taking place this week at the Swiss Museum of Transport, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts conducted an extensive study. In the first part – an online survey of over 6,000 tourists in eight countries – researchers looked at how travellers define sustainable tourism and whether the topic of sustainability plays a role when people select a holiday destination or book a trip. In the second part, Swiss Kuoni customers were asked how much more they would be willing to pay for “sustainable holidays”.

Nearly 30,000 customers of Kuoni and Helvetic Tours in Switzerland were sent an online questionnaire. Sixteen per cent or a good 4,800 customers participated in the survey. The researchers looked at how much more customers would spend on sustainability, specifically for a safari trip to South Africa and beach holidays in the Maldives. The findings were consistent in both cases.

The conclusion: Customers are inclined to book more sustainable offers but are not prepared to pay significantly more and would only consider doing so when all aspects of their holiday are perceived as sustainable. In concrete terms, this means: the more sustainable the individual factors of the particular travel offer (local products, working conditions and an environmental approach), the greater the likelihood that the offer will be considered by prospective customers. Even in such cases, however, individuals are not prepared to pay the effective additional price, as shown by the example of CO<sub>2</sub> compensation, for instance.

The precedence of cost consciousness over environmental awareness was already demonstrated by the first part of the empirical study in eight countries. The factors of weather/climate and price play a much greater role in the booking of leisure travel. “Sustainability is of little importance and comes second to last among the eight criteria there are to choose from”, wrote the authors. Nevertheless, tourism enterprises that emphasise sustainability in their product range can look toward a potential of around twenty per cent of travellers who ranked the topic of sustainability in third place or higher as a decision-making factor.

The complete study can be downloaded here:

<http://www.wtflucerne.org/study-2011/>



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### **About World Tourism Forum Lucerne**

As an interdisciplinary platform, the Forum offers decision makers in business, government, science and finance an overview of the current topics and trends in the tourism industry. It is the only international platform in which leading decision makers and promising young talents in the industry have the opportunity to interact as part of the Next Generation programme. World Tourism Forum Lucerne relies on the support of an international advisory council whose members include Samih Sawiris (Chairman & CEO Orascom Development Holding AG), Thea Chiesa (Head of Aviation, Travel and Tourism World Economic Forum), Andreas Meyer (CEO of Swiss Federal Railways), Sir David Michels (Deputy Chairman Marks & Spencer Plc., former CEO of Hilton Group) and Geoffrey Lipman (Special Advisor to the Secretary General of UNWTO, Director of greenearth.travel). The World Tourism Forum Lucerne will be held for the second time at the Swiss Museum of Transport in Lucerne in 2011. The event is being organised by Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Participation is limited to 250 persons. For more information: [www.wtflucerne.org](http://www.wtflucerne.org).

### **Contact:**

### **For more information on the findings of the study:**

#### **Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts**

Dr. Roger Wehrli  
Tel.: + 41 (0)41 228 42 83  
[roger.wehrli@hslu.ch](mailto:roger.wehrli@hslu.ch)

#### **Kuoni Travel Holding Ltd.**

Matthias Leisinger  
Tel.: +41 (0)44 277 52 44  
[matthias.leisinger@kuoni.com](mailto:matthias.leisinger@kuoni.com)

### **Contact:**

#### **World Tourism Forum Lucerne**

Prof. Martin Barth  
Tel.: +41 (0)41 228 99 80  
[martin.barth@wtflucerne.org](mailto:martin.barth@wtflucerne.org)

### **Media office:**

#### **Primus Communications**

Sabine Biedermann / Vanessa Bay  
Tel.: +41 (0)44 387 57 37  
[sabine.biedermann@primuscommunications.ch](mailto:sabine.biedermann@primuscommunications.ch)  
Mobile: +41 (0)78 628 10 28  
[vanessa.bay@primuscommunications.ch](mailto:vanessa.bay@primuscommunications.ch)  
Mobile: +41 (0)79 800 56 77