Hubert Job/ Michael Lutzenberger, Würzburg

The relevance of package tourists for informal sector micro-enterprises

A case study from The Gambia

Abstract: Against the background of the economic effects of tourism in developing countries and the positive effects that *informal sector micro-enterprises* (ISME) can have on alleviating poverty, this paper discusses the situation of mass package tourism destinations based on a case study from The Gambia. This explorative study discusses the position of ISME from two perspectives: the access to the market with the development and spatial distribution of ISME in the context of the life-cycle of tourism resorts and on the other side focuses on the tourists themselves and their demands, decision-making and behavior, as well as the factors that influence them. Results suggest that there is a market for ISME at mass tourism destinations alongside the formal sector. A survey of the existing situation and indications from interviews with tourists suggest the need for a discussion of an additional phase in the model of the spatial distribution of the informal and formal sectors in seaside resorts, based on *Vorlaufers's* concept of the life-cycle of tourism resorts. **Keywords:** developing countries, informal sector micro-enterprises (ISME), life-cycle of tourism resorts, The Gambia

Introduction

Since the 1950s, tourism has experienced an ongoing boom, and for the last 25 years the share of tourism that corresponds to developing countries has been increasing steadily (ADERHOLD et al. 2006). While the economic effects of tourism in general have been widely discussed in the literature (HALL/PAGE 2002), attention must be paid to one especially important concept related to the real income in foreign currency that accrues from tourism and the benefits it offers, especially in developing countries. This concept is the so-called *leakage rate* of foreign currency, which reflects the fact that frequently only a modest proportion of the revenue that tourism generates actually remains in the countries visited. This leakage results e.g. from profit transfers by foreign investors, necessary reinvestment in imports. It depends on factors such as the type and structure of tourism and the level of development of the country's national economy and infrastructure (VORLAUFER 2003). Despite the problems of leakage, the *United Nations World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO) and others argue that tourism can indeed contribute to alleviating poverty and to local economic development in

developing countries. To minimize leakage, linkages to the local economy through informal sector micro-enterprises (ISME) should be created (WTO 2002).

Studies have illustrated positive effects for local economies (e.g. for small-scale tourism in national parks, see JOB 1994), while, in recent years, community-based tourism projects such as the village camps in Senegal (KANE 1997) have attempted to build linkages to local producers in order to increase the impact of tourism on poverty alleviation (HÄUSLER 2004). However, this type of tourism, usually with lower standards and closer contact to the local population, caters mainly to a small-market segment and is not a solution for the mass package holiday market. Literature also suggests that conventional package holiday tourists have much more conservative consumption patterns, in particular with regard to food and therefore provide fewer possibilities for local ISME (TORRES 2002). Studies indicate low linkage rates to locally and regionally based businesses and the marginalization of local populations (BRENNER 2005). However sustainable approaches should not remain in a

niche but strive to confront the ever-increasing market of mass tourism (PPT 2004).

In this paper, initial research on the informal sector and its spatial distribution in tourism in developing countries and theories on tourism behavior are summarized. Based on a case study from The Gambia, the status of ISME at this package holiday destination is surveyed in the light of these theories. With the rapid growth of mass tourism in developing countries in recent years, The Gambia, which has not been much covered in research so far, was selected as one suitable country that represents all the criteria of a developing country where seaside package tourism is the predominant form of tourism. Specific criteria which lead to the selection of The Gambia are the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in the field of tourism and ISME which resulted in the implementation of various approaches like *Official Tourist Guides* (BAH/GOODWIN 2003). These approaches provided a suitable background for research on ISME.

The spatial situation of ISME is an interesting geographical aspect and the key for their access to the tourists as consumers. Therefore it is an essential factor for the economic success of ISME at a mass tourist destination. An equally important factor for any success of the concept of alleviating poverty through linkages to ISME in tourism, however, is the tourists themselves and the decisions and actions they take as consumers. Paradoxical as it may seem, however, research on tourism rarely focuses primarily on the tourists themselves. MOWFORTH/MUNT (1998, 38) observe, for example: "Academic prejudices lead to analyzing production, rather than consumption, and a tendency to focus upon the impacts of tourism in which tourists are seen, at best, as a homogeneous and undifferentiated group and, at worst, deemed immaterial; tourists need to be taken more seriously". Likewise, in discussions of poverty reduction, the tourist-as-actor has not been given much consideration, as the focus seems to be placed upon implementing the ideas associated with this concept and on studying the actors located on the supply side, such as donors and governments (WTO 2002). TORRES (2002) also stated that tourist consumption and behavior has not been covered to a great extent in empirical research - in regards to food consumption literature is rather often based on anecdotal references - despite the fact

that it has been identified as an important area of interest. In her research she focuses on tourist's food consumption patterns with a case study in Yucatan and backward linkages between tourism and agriculture.

This paper follows a wider approach and explores linkages to local producers in general. Hence it examines the tourist-as-actor at a mass tourism destination and how his demands, decisions and behavior influence the idea of poverty alleviation through linkages with ISME. This contribution attempts to establish existing patterns of usage and ratings of services and products of ISME and to determine what factors influence those decisions and behaviors. Indications from the interviews, together with the survey of tourism enterprises, enable to identify potential and obstacles for ISME and provide a basis for further discussion of the development of ISME at mass tourism package holiday destinations from the spatial point of view and in comparison to VORLAUFER's model (1999). Furthermore, the results make it possible to comment on the probability of establishing ISME at mass holiday destinations and thus increasing poverty alleviation.

Informal sector, mass tourism and the life-cycle of a resort

The *International Labor Organization* (ILO) defines the informal sector as being characterized by small-scale economic activities and self-employment with, or without, hired workers and at a low level of organization and technology that usually operate outside the law and regulations and with no proper recognition from the authorities (ESCHER 1999). The literature does not always indicate the exact criteria used to define informal enterprises and distinguish them from formal sector businesses and its complex interactions. For the tourism industry, most authors suggest classifying all enterprises with less than ten employees as micro-corporations (KELLER 2004). Typically in the tourism industry, these are to be found in the accommodation (e.g. small guest houses) and catering sectors, and may include ground-tour operators and tourist shops. For restaurants, VORLAUFER (1999) considers the number of seats as a criterion for assigning them to the formal sector, though OPPERMANN (1993) points out that other criteria as low capital investment and the fact that the owners of these

establishments are usually well integrated in the local community are rather making these businesses a part of the informal sector.

In this paper, the term *informal sector micro-enterprise* (ISME) is used to subsume all small-scale economic activities. In the context of the objectives of this research it is necessary to create a wider definition for small scale local business activities. Therefore our definition includes typical informal sector activities like hawkers and guides but also local businesses, which may not fulfill all criteria of informality (e.g. tourist taxis do not operate outside the law), as well as some businesses (e.g. certain restaurants), that may have slightly more than nine employees. Exact numbers may be exceedingly difficult to determine, especially when dealing with a developing country and a seasonal business such as the tourism industry in The Gambia.

There is a variety of general theories addressing the development of tourism over time and space, most of them belonging either to the diffusion or the dependency paradigm. OPPERMANN (1993) notes that these theories usually fail to acknowledge the existence of the two sectors. He developed a model that is including both sectors and their development on national level over time. Similarly GORMSEN (1997) is analyzing the spatio-temporal development of seaside tourism with its regional participation, involvement of social classes and types of accommodation in a global scale (cf. RUSSEL/FAULKNER 2004). In this paper the focus is on the development at resort level and therefore the concept of the life-cycle of a tourism resort by VORLAUFER (1999) appears to be the most suitable model. With regard to the development at resort level the models of Vorlaufer and Oppermann follow similar patterns, but due to its focus the Vorlaufer model is more detailed. Parallel to BUTLER's (1980) concept of the *tourist area life-cycle* (TALC), Vorlaufer developed a model that explains the evolution and spatial distribution of enterprises in the informal and formal sectors during the life-cycle of tourist destinations (see Fig. 1).

In the different stages of the TALC, the informal sector has a different quantitative and qualitative relevance with regard to the formal sector. In his model, VORLAUFER (1999, 681) identifies two types of resorts:

– *Type I*: The formal sector is displacing the informal sector more quickly, usually with

the support of the government through spatial planning and the police force.

– *Type II*: Slower development or growth of tourism permits the expansion of a dualistic structure that includes both the informal and formal sectors.

In the initial stages, the tourism infrastructure available to the first individual visitors, drifters or explorers (COHEN 1972) is usually provided completely by the local population (e.g. farmers who rent huts and animals for transportation). This structure fulfills the criteria of the informal sector. Exceptions are resorts that were developed from scratch in virgin areas, previously quite undeveloped and untouched by tourism, such as Cancún in Mexico (TORRES/MOMSEN 2005). In the early introductory phase, services and products become increasingly professionalized and oriented towards tourism; for example, farmers may build simple accommodations or souvenir stalls. Later, more educated or influential locals may begin to invest in tourism. In the stage in which the formal sector and national and/or international investors become active in such markets, the informal sector loses its importance. The formal sector then enjoys rapid and substantial growth because its structure, power and capital make it the strongest competitor. In addition, restrictive measures instituted by the government through laws and police enforcement often attempt to restrain, or even eliminate the informal sector. The further development of this sector during the stage of growth and maturity depends on the type of resort one is analyzing. While in type I-resorts the number of employees and businesses in the informal sector decreases significantly; in the second type, a dualistic structure may develop.

These developments in the TALC also influence the spatial distribution of the informal sector. In the early stages, this sector operates out of its original sites in the villages. With the initial development of a simple infrastructure – especially for tourists – new, more suitable and attractive locations (e.g. closer to the beaches) are brought into use. However, when the formal sector enters a tourist market, it has the capital, power and usually the political support required to take over and occupy the most attractive locations, such as beachfronts, while the informal sector is progressively pushed away towards less attractive sites.

A short reflection on some theories on tourist behaviour

The aim of this article is not an in-depth discussion of behaviorist theories but in the context of the case study we will give only a short overview on some theories on tourist's behaviour at a destination which are especially relevant in the context of this research.

Tourists are acting as consumers and therefore various general theories and principles can be used to explain their decisions and behaviour, for example consumers are searching for the best value for money. The same applies for general psychological and sociological factors that are influencing the behaviour of humans and of course also apply during a holiday. The majority of tourists are characterised as passive visitors attaining fulfilment through a des-

tination's visual consumption including for example the respective cultural surroundings and inhabitants. By means of taking photographs and films the visitors' experiences are preserved and thus may be reproduced numerous times. Decisive is the visual, social as well as the individually created anticipation, conception and imagination that the tourist voyeur longs to prove true during his journey. Therefore the primary motivation can be seen in striving to realise these daydream-like perceptions rooted in one's fantasy rather than encountering the true physical, tangible nature of a place (URRY 2002). Since reality is unable to definitely project this idealisation – e.g. internalised by picture postcards, literature, TV shows – the search for ever-new products is immanent within tourism. The grist to the tourism mill is to find and travel the extraordi-

Fig. 1: Spatial distribution of the informal and formal sectors in a seaside resort, based on the concept of the life-cycle of a type II-tourism-resort

Source: slightly altered from VORLAUFER 1999 (translation by the authors)

nary: „Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary. Tourist experiences involve [...] pleasurable experiences which are, by comparison with the everyday, out of the ordinary” (URRY 2002, 12). Particularly tourism to developing countries is marked by the propensity to the extraordinary to be set apart from un-specific mass-tourism. Moreover it encompasses the encounter of people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ways of living, including possible positive (for example foreign exchange earnings) and negative (for example prostitution) effects (JOB/WEIZENEGGER 2003). Therefore, the visited indigenous people of such destinations become objects of the tourist gaze (URRY 2002), either directly as a crucial part of the exotic experience or else indirectly through the power of the tourist gaze, equaling a visual appropriation.

Each decision during a holiday, e.g. how to spend the day, is a result of a complex decision-making process that is influenced by many factors (SWARBROOKE/HORNER 1999). The range of spatial activity and readiness to face new or unknown surroundings and experiences during a holiday is influenced by many causes. In intercultural communication theory, fear and insecurity corresponding with the level of knowledge about the new and alien surroundings are seen as the main limiting factors (LUGER 2004). The term culture shock is widely used in this context. An academic definition of culture shock is given by VESTER (1993, 172): “(...) a sudden, unpleasant confrontation with so far unknown and unexpected characteristics of the alien culture”. The level of knowledge is depending on own travel experience and information but also pictures and myths created by the tourism industry and the media, that manipulate the expectations and perceptions of the tourists and influence their behaviour and what they will see and understand of the alien culture. Confrontation with the real everyday life with all its hard and/or boring aspects and the foreign culture is rarely taking place. MAC CANNELL (1976) created the term “staged authenticity” for this experience of myths, illusions and real fake. “The tourist is after all no ethnologist. He is usually satisfied with the things that are pointed out as well worth seeing, even if they are only cultural trivia, artefacts of local culture (...)” (LUGER 2004, 53). But even if the experience of alien culture is reduced to a “staged authenticity”

the tourist is still facing all types of new impacts in an unfamiliar environment: physical impacts, e.g. in the form of water, unfamiliar food, hygienic conditions or bugs, new senses like sounds, smells or climate and still cultural differences like attitudes and certain behaviour or manners. Handling these impacts and the holiday stress they produce may lead to many different reactions, e.g. not leaving the hotel anymore and avoiding contact and can consequently influence the whole behaviour of the tourist during the holiday (LUGER 2004). The interaction between tourists and ISME is a form of intercultural communication and tourists are faced with all those aspects in some form or the other.

Case study: The Gambia

Situated on the west coast of Africa, The Gambia is the smallest mainland country on the continent, with a total area of just 11,295 km², and a population of 1.4 mio. inhabitants. Except for its Atlantic coastline, it is completely surrounded by Senegal. The *United Nations Human Development Index* (HDI) classifies The Gambia as a *Least Developed Country* (LDC) ranking at 155 out of 177 countries. The percentage of people living with less than 1 US\$ a day is a staggering 59 % in The Gambia while 82 % of the population live with less than 2 US\$ a day. Other key indicators are the high illiteracy rate (37 %) and the low life expectancy (53.9 years). The predominant economic activity in The Gambia is subsistence farming with 80 % of the country's population working in the agricultural sector and agriculture is making up 32 % of the gross domestic product (GDP)(2004). Groundnuts are the primary cash crop and export product. Harvests have been improved over recent years but continue to be vulnerable to rainfall and locust. The manufacturing sector has been almost unchanged during the last ten years with only small scale production for the domestic market, e.g. fruit juices and soaps. Therefore it provides little opportunity for employment. More recently, however, tourism has emerged as another important industry, and in 2004 services made up the major share of this nation's GDP (53.5 %) (EIU 2005). Tourism is also an important source of foreign currency. In 2003, net earnings of 33.1 mio. US\$ were recorded in the tourism balance (IMF 2004) but, like many other developing countries, The Gambia

has a high leakage rate, estimated at 77 % (MADLEY 1996).

International tourism in The Gambia began in the 1960s, when the first visitors arrived on package holiday trips and the first tourist hotels were built (Bah/Goodwin 2004).

In the early 1970s the Gambian government designated a coastal area south of the capital Banjul as *Tourism Development Area* (TDA). To support the growth of tourism the government invested in hotels and basic infrastructure but due to a shortage of domestic funds also provided investment incentives like fiscal exemptions and tax relief to attract foreign capital (DIECKE 1993). Within the first ten years the number of arrivals of charter tourists raised from only 300 in 1965 to 21,116 in 1975 and the number of hotels and hotel beds developed from two hotels with 52 beds to 13 hotels with 1,997 beds (BRAMBLES/MURRAY 2000). The development continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s and peaked in 1991 with 114,000 arrivals and about 5,000 hotel beds (THOMPSON et al. 1995). In 1994 tourist arrivals suffered a slump on the heels of a military coup and a travel warning by the British government (EIU 2002) and only some 95,000 tourists visited the country (EIU 2005). Since then arrival numbers have picked up again but the peak of 1991 has not been reached until today.

The main area of origin is the U.K., the Netherlands is second, while significantly smaller numbers come from Germany, Denmark and Spain (based on our research and calculations from tour operator and airport sources for 2004/05). The Gambia can be classified as a "typical sun-and-sea" package holiday destination that offers a fairly standard product whose main assets are unspoiled beaches and a balmy climate. In the 2001-02 season, a study identified 90 % of the arrivals as package tourists (BAH/GOODWIN 2003). Tourism in The Gambia is highly seasonal. The high season lasts from November to April, when the European winter coincides with the dry season in The Gambia. Hence offering a pleasant climate with a short flying time from the outgoing nations in the season when destinations around the Mediterranean are not suitable for sun and sea tourism. During the low seasons many hotels lay off a large proportion of their staff and some close down completely (DIECKE 1993).

Tourism in The Gambia focuses on the TDA, the coastal areas of Banjul beach and the zone southwest of the capital city of Banjul, from Bakau to Kololi; a strip approximately 15 km long and 750 m wide. All major hotels are situated in these two areas.

If we were to classify the spatial and time-scale development of the Atlantic coast resorts in The Gambia according to VORLAUFER's scheme (1999, 681), they would fall into the resort type II category. Although the area along the coast was declared a TDA by the government, the development of resorts there cannot be classified as "fast, planned development with a rapid displacement of the informal sector". Rather, hotel and resort development took place in selected spots in the TDA over an extended period of time (in resort life-cycle terms), and with no specific master plan, while other kinds of structures and ISME were able to emerge alongside the hotel developments.

The current situation of tourist resorts in The Gambia in terms of the life-cycle of destinations is rather more difficult to determine, as there is insufficient data and information available on development in the past or on plans for the future. Hence, this classification must be based on indicators such as the number of arrivals and the status quo observed during our field research. The number of arrivals has been rather stagnant for several years, showing only modest growth. No major new markets or market segments have been developed in recent years, and some tour operators from earlier core sending-countries have withdrawn completely (Sweden), or significantly scaled down their offerings (Denmark, Germany).

The Gambia is still a "typical sun-and-sea" destination and there has been no progress to extend the season into the European Summer. On the supply side, there have been no new major hotel projects in recent years, and several existing hotels are in a very run-down condition or stand partly empty and in need of extensive renovations to meet international standards in the highly competitive market that sees new developments in many other competing long haul destinations. Over the last 20 years the share of private Gambian ownership has been increasing as international owners have been selling older properties due to the shrinking profit margins (THOMPSON 1995). Outside the major hotels the tourist infrastruc-

ture is almost nonexistent. There are no special leisure facilities for tourists except horse riding and beach buggy hire on some beaches and a rather badly maintained golf course in Fajara. Only the Senegambia resort area offers a small range of restaurants, bars and tourist shops. The general infrastructure in the TDA has been improved in recent years with new roads being built or being paved, including a new connection road to the airport. Road connections upcountry are still in a very bad condition and make access for further tourism development in these areas difficult. Another problem is still the erratic water and electricity supply and hotels have to provide spare generators to guarantee electricity at all times. Besides the beaches and the climate The Gambia offers relatively little in natural attractions or unique selling points. There are no famous national parks that are the main natural potential in East or Southern Africa and apart from hippos in the River Gambia there is no big game. All of these factors indicate the TALC's phase of maturity: one that is tending towards stagnation, though certain resort areas – e.g., Fajara, with its semi-derelict Fajara Hotel – may well have already entered the phase of decline.

Methods

A qualitative approach was used for this study, as there is little research available on contemporary tourist demand and, in particular, on their decisions and behavior with relation to ISME. As a result, it was necessary to explore these topics with a high degree of openness and reflexivity (SCHOENBERGER 1991) in order to inquire into the relationships, connections and correlations among people and to reveal unexpected or unknown links (KOCH/GRETSCH 1994).

Field research was conducted during a six week stay March and April 2005 in winter high season. Tourists were approached at six different locations in the Kotu Beach and Senegambia resorts. Firstly the different locations were selected to cover the different infrastructure of ISME to which the tourists have access to in their resort area. Secondly the different locations should cover a wider variety of tourists: customers of *Gambia Experience* (a specialised tour operator that provides more in-depth information to its customers), customers of big tour operators that offer The Gambia as one destination among many, and

different service levels of hotels. The number of interviews at each location depended on the size and occupancy rate of the hotels. This distribution was useful to cover the different groups and to get a representative spread. Participants came from the main tourist-sending countries, and our sample corresponded to the share of each of these countries in the actual number of tourists who visit The Gambia. In total 34 interviews with tourists were carried out. On average the interviews lasted between 40 to 45 minutes.

Tourists were approached through semi-structured interviews based on a catalogue of questions that covered all of the relevant aspects that could be identified at that point of the research. During the interviews the sequence of questions was adapted to the flow of the interview and adjusted it to the specific interview situation and the background, knowledge and position of interviewees. Issues such as perceptions and attitudes can be very difficult to measure, especially in the context of poverty alleviation, because replies to direct questions that request opinions always run the risk of being affected by matters of "social desirability". As a result, some topics had to be operationalised; e.g., perception and awareness of the problems of developing countries were also surveyed through the interviewees' prior expectations and preparation. In order to avoid using the academic term ISME in the interviews, the paraphrase "activities outside the hotel" was used for sectors that could not be asked directly like restaurants or taxis. This term covered all possible activities that could have involved the usage of ISME. The replies then could be categorized into ISME or the formal sector, e.g. excursions booked through the tour operators. The questionnaire covered seven main topics: organization of the vacations, motives and preparation, activities at the destination, attitudes towards ISME, demands and suggestions for improving the informal sector, attitudes and perceptions towards developing countries in general, and an overall rating of The Gambia as a tourist destination.

The statements collected in the interviews were grouped in clusters of connected and related topics. The topics are oriented primarily towards the thematic areas that formed the basis of the interview questionnaire, though new areas of interest can emerge during the research process (MEUSER/NAGEL 1991). Due to

Fig. 2: Spatial distribution of informal sector micro-enterprises in the Kotu and Kololi resort areas

Source: own research

the nature of the qualitative approach the findings do not produce numbers or percentages. However they give an idea of tendencies. The results can be roughly split into three groups: some were produced by the majority of tourists i.e. over two thirds of the interviewees. Whereas other findings were only supported by some tourists i.e. less than half and others were only voiced by a few individual tourists.

Findings: ISME in The Gambia

Classification and domains:

The ISME found in the tourism industry in The Gambia are quite typical of tourism resorts in developing countries in general, and are comprised mainly of common occupations, such as vendors, transport services and guides. Hawkers are present everywhere in the TDA and sell a variety of imported products, including, e.g., imitation sunglasses, as well as locally produced handicrafts. Typical for The Gambia are fruit-sellers, primarily women, who sell locally-grown mangoes, pineapples and peanuts; and juice-vendors, predominantly men, who have their own little stalls – called juice bars – on the beach near the sun bed areas of the hotels. In addition, there are official tourist guides (OTG) and official green-colored tourist taxis. One NGO based in Gambia, called ASSET (*Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism*) – is dedicated to helping the small-scale enterprise sector benefit more from tourism by unifying it, improving its products and marketing, and introducing and maintaining quality standards among its members. By the same token, it helps such ventures gain access to financing and insurance, advocates and represents its members' interests to the formal sector and the government, and promotes their services among the general public. The activities of ASSET have led to the introduction of a *Code of Conduct*, licensing and badging, as well as other improvements, including the introduction of menus and signboards with fixed prices for the last four sectors mentioned above (BAH/GOODWIN 2003). While some of these activities have proven very successful, compliance with the rules of the *Code of Conduct* seems to be an especially difficult problem in all sectors concerned. One occupation that can also be included in the informal sector and for which The Gambia is quite infamous, are the so-called bumsters. This term refers to young

men who linger on the beaches and around the resort areas trying to earn money by offering tourists their services, mainly as guides, though often they simply follow and pester the visitors (SEY 1999). Senegambia is the only resort area that offers a typical "resort high street" outside the hotels; a stretch of road that houses a range of restaurants, bars, internet cafés and a few tourist shops that can also be classified as ISME.

Access to the market and spatial distribution:

The spatial distribution of ISME at the three main resort areas in Kotu and Kololi – Kotu Beach, Palma Rima and Senegambia areas – is illustrated on the map (see Fig. 2). Some ISME-like restaurants and small tourist shops can be found in prime locations inside the resort areas, but there are also several restaurants located quite far away from those zones (and thus not shown on the map). Although those restaurants can only be reached by taxi, many of them are well-established businesses. Smaller hotels, lodges and guesthouses are all located on the main road or in the village areas, away from the main resort locations.

At the entrances to the resorts there are police checkpoints. Hawkers carrying small wares are not stopped at these checkpoints and can walk along the street, but most restaurants have security services that prevent those individuals from hassling their guests. Small stalls or local taxis are not allowed in the core resort areas. Only tourist taxis are allowed to wait in front of the hotels where the OTG also have their kiosks. Beaches are generally public and open to everyone, and there are no private or fenced beaches. However, all hotels do employ security guards for their sun bed areas, though they apply different policies in terms of allowing access to hawkers, licensed fruit- or juice-sellers or bumsters.

Tourists' decisions and behavior with respect to ISME

With respect to tourists' decisions and behavior towards the ISME, several aspects – from their motives for taking their vacation in The Gambia and their prior expectations and knowledge, to their sources of information and the influence of formal sector actors – are all influencing their actions during their holiday. In addition, tourists' use of ISME and their comments on them provided direct information on the issues that most interested us.

Reasons for coming to The Gambia and pre-vacation expectations

The motives for traveling are vital aspects of the decision-making process before one books a holiday and certainly influence one's behavior at the destination. Considering that tourists' knowledge, perceptions, awareness and acceptance of developing countries and their problems are important factors that can influence their behavior towards ISME, it is interesting to ask if, and how, they become informed before and during their travel and what their perceptions are.

The majority of tourists cited the warm climate during the harsh European winter as their prime motive for coming to The Gambia. When selecting The Gambia over other typical package holiday destinations (the Canary Islands, for example, were mentioned frequently), tourists decided on the basis of expectations such as "more exotic" or "not too commercialized". However, knowledge about The Gambia among most of the tourists interviewed was generally quite sparse, or even non-existent, and the same tourists who selected it because it is "exotic" also confessed that they really did not know what to expect upon their arrival. Their imaginings and expectations were based mainly on the information contained in brochures with glossy pictures of beautiful beaches and comparisons to countries visited before, that are considered somehow similar. Tourists regard The Gambia as a developing country, but the main concept that they associate with this classification is that of visible poverty evidenced by shabby housing, bad roads and other such indicators that are readily apparent to visitors from industrialized countries. The awareness of people's living conditions and particular problems, or of the causes and possible solutions to them, is entirely lacking. The idea of a poor country, of course, often leads to concerns about personal security and the assumption that it is unsafe to leave one's hotel, together with the fear of being ripped off or of encountering corruption. The scarce knowledge of The Gambia, and of developing countries in general, shown by the tourists that we interviewed can be attributed to their disinterest in actively seeking information. Only a few had purchased guide books to learn something more about the country, while most simply trusted in the information provided by their tour operator and comments by their companions.

When we attempted to classify the tourists we interviewed, we chose the typology of *Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung* (ADERHOLD et al. 2000, 116 ff.), which focuses especially on tourists in developing countries. According to this scheme, the people interviewed may be characterized as "beach-relaxation tourists", the typical tourist at "sun-and-sea" destinations, whose main motivation is to seek relaxation and whose interest in the culture and problems of the country is quite small and in no way influences his wellbeing or holiday enjoyment. The vast majority of package tourists to developing countries fall into this category.

The role of tour operators

As service and information providers, tour operators exercise a significant influence on the decisions and behavior of tourists at all stages of travel: right from the decision-making process through to their stay at the destination. In the first place, tour operators give destinations like The Gambia the necessary presence in tourist-sending markets through their advertisements, brochures and high-street travel agencies. Furthermore, their packages offer reassurances about safety, security and quality standards that can persuade tourists to opt for a destination about which they may know very little. Many of the tourists we interviewed can be classified as "package holiday makers" who cannot imagine organizing a holiday on their own and so they frequent destinations where they are already familiar with the circumstances and infrastructure. Others stated that, while they could imagine organizing their own vacation, the price is usually lower when they book through tour operators and, therefore, they see no reason for self-organizing.

Another important element in such packages are the so-called holiday representatives; people who, among other duties, provide tourists with information about the destination. It is especially during the welcome meetings that these holiday representatives are an important source of information for the tourists who often arrive quite uninformed at their destination. They may have an impact on the future behavior and activities of the tourists. However, reactions to, and judgments of, the information they offer is quite variable. Prior travel experience, for example, is one factor that influences these reactions. Critical judgments are often based on earlier experiences with welcome meetings that frequently focused too much on

selling the excursions rather than on providing unbiased information. Though some tourists do evaluate whether the information given in a welcome meeting is more exhaustive and less pushy towards selling tours than what they are used to from previous holidays, by no means do all of them examine critically the information proffered by these holiday representatives, while others simply believe everything they have heard about the country and the possible harassments and hazards they may encounter. They accept the information and are likely to adapt their behavior to what they have heard, especially in areas such as hygiene, scams and warnings that tourists need to be very careful when dealing with local people who ask for money. All of these factors can have a significant influence on tourists' behavior towards ISME. It proved very difficult to determine, even among the tourists we interviewed, whether they are more accepting or critical of the information they received from the holiday representative. This seems to depend primarily on the personality of individual tourists: those who are more adventurous, or more fearful; those who are open to new experiences or those who are more conservative, critical or credulous. Restaurants and bars usually make up an important commercial sector in tourism resorts and often fall into the category of ISME. Tourists' patronage of these establishments usually depends on the catering package they have booked. Besides the obvious reasons of personal preference, decisions as to which catering package to choose (e.g. all-inclusive) is frequently based on the variety of packages made available by the tour operators at certain hotels or destinations. Statements by tourists show that the selection of a particular destination, resort or hotel was of a higher priority than the catering arrangements available for that particular resort or hotel, which may well depend on what the tour operator does offer.

Attitudes towards ISME

Excursions, trips and taxis

Among the tourists we interviewed, there was a clear tendency towards booking excursions through tour operators. The use of such agencies or operators gives tourists a certain degree of assurance as to the quality, safety and security of the excursion packages they purchase. The importance of these factors becomes clear

when worries about insurance and the condition of vehicles are emphasized. In addition, tour operators offer fixed prices, so tourists do not have to fear being ripped off, as may be the case if they depend upon taxi drivers, independent guides or local businesses. This particular argument, however, reflects a certain prejudice and lack of knowledge of the situation in The Gambia, where tourist taxis and OTG operate on the basis of a fixed price system. "You don't get ripped off, I suppose. (...) Insurance! (...) you don't know if their [author's note: local tour operators] buses will break down, you have no guarantee, you are not insured either, any of your own home insurances won't pay for you either. If you book it through the tour operator and if their vehicle breaks down, they guarantee you they get another one. They guarantee to look after you. You know what I mean. Not in this sort of country. If we would be in Spain we would drive ourselves" (UK, couple, male 62 and female 63, first visit).

On the other hand, not all tourists follow the same booking behavior for all their excursions, and some distinguish between longer excursions – for which they seek the safety and security that the tour operator can provide – and shorter trips, where they anticipate less risk and are comfortable with using local taxis or guides, or even going out on their own. "Well, for the larger excursions we prefer doing those with the tour operator but the smaller ones we do on our own and try local taxis" (Germany, male 50, first visit).

During the course of their holiday, tourists may also change their attitudes and behavior, once they feel more able to judge the situation, circumstances and dangers from their own experience. On the other hand, there are a few tourists who prefer to organize trips on their own rather than booking pre-arranged excursions. Those tourists still tend to depend on OTG, local acquaintances or guides recommended by other tourists, or even locals whom they may befriend among the hotel staff, instead of venturing around completely on their own. The use of tourist taxis mirrors visitors' behavior related to excursions. Those who prefer not to use such taxis state most frequently that it is because they have doubts about their own safety and the roadworthiness of the cars. Those tourists who tend to have negative perceptions also appear doubtful about the system of fixed prices and licenses, and this leaves

them constantly fearful of being ripped off. Finally, tourists who do use tourist taxis, or can imagine themselves using them, comment positively on their organization and fixed prices. These factors make it easier for them to use a tourist taxi, as it is more similar to what they are used to back home. The presence of a license document receives especially positive comments, increases tourist confidence and gives visitors a greater sense of security. Nevertheless, their use of tourist taxis by no means implies that these tourists do not have similar reservations with regards to the condition of

the vehicles as those visitors who refrain from using them.

Restaurants:

As we mentioned above, the choice of eating outside the hotel corresponds to the type of catering package that one has booked. Going out to restaurants and eating local food is often described as part of the holiday experience, and several interviewees noted that they do not want to eat only European food but also to try local dishes and thus experience the country. "We like going out in the night having food in

Tab. 1: Opportunities and disadvantages of ISME

	<i>Opportunities for ISME</i>	<i>Disadvantages for ISME</i>
Internal to the tourist (difficult to influence from outside)	Openness Demand for variety Demand for "authenticity"	Fearfulness Insecurity Incredulity with respect to information More trust in tour operators for excursions (assurance) Dislike shopping Dislike contact with locals Stereotypes, e.g. risks, rip-off
May be influenced by the informal sector and ISME	Selling "authenticity" Fixed prices (e.g., taxis, guides) Stalls to reduce hassling Personal relationships Price	Hassle, selling methods Haggling over prices Quality standards; e.g., cars, insurance Hygiene standards Compliance with hygiene standards Variety Lack of information; e.g., on standards and quality Lack of awareness
Can be influenced by the formal sector and policy-makers	Licenses Organizations	Supply from the formal sector Lack of information; e.g., hazards, knowledge of the country Lack of awareness High numbers lead to competition Market power of tour operators with respect to prices e.g., flights, accommodation

Source: own compilation

a local restaurant and a bottle of wine, that's part of the holiday. (...) We like to have local food as well. (...) That's part of the holiday experience, what you came for" (UK, couple, male 36 and female 32, first visit).

While hygiene in restaurants is certainly an important area of concern for tourists, it does not necessarily stop them from visiting local food emporiums. In fact, the tourists we interviewed repeatedly voiced a quite relaxed attitude towards this particular issue. They tend to judge restaurants on first impressions, by catching a glimpse of the kitchen, or by following the recommendations of other tourists. In fact, the attitude of just going out and trying local restaurants without thinking too much about the risks was also quite widespread among those interviewed.

Fruit- and juice-vendors and craft markets

Buying fruits from local vendors was a fairly common practice among tourists, who consider these products a good afternoon snack. But this also satisfies other desires, beyond the simple satisfaction of consuming a product. The women who sell fruits also add a pleasant decorative element that completes the exotic setting of a beautiful beach located in a far-away African country. "It's part of the colour of the place, the women with the basket on their heads. You don't want to spoil that really. It might become too conventional" (UK, female 65, over 10 visits).

MAC CANNELL (1972) coined the term "staged authenticity" to refer to this experience of illusions and "fake reality" and URRY (2002) speaks of the "tourist gaze", as we have heard before. Fruit juices are bought much less than fruits, mainly due to hygienic concerns, but there is also greater competition here, in the form of soft drinks, water and beer that can be purchased in the hotels. However, tourists also often commented that these fruit- and juice-vendors hassle them far too much in the sun bed areas where they can set up stalls and are free to circulate and offer their wares. The majority of the tourists interviewed favored the idea of stalls, as they think they would reduce the amount of hassling they have to put up with. This constant harassment can become a source of holiday stress, and may be a reason for people to modify their behavior during a vacation. In fact, it can lead some tourists to go as far as refraining from buying anything at

all! A similar situation applies to the craft market, where the constant hassling and haggling that many tourists experience constitutes a situation they may find most uncomfortable and unfamiliar. Buying souvenirs is an essential activity during the holiday for most of the tourists we interviewed, but some attempt to minimize the stress it causes by avoiding craft markets entirely, preferring to purchase their souvenirs elsewhere, primarily at shops located inside their hotels, where they feel more comfortable. "We went there and we couldn't get out quick enough. You know, you look at one thing and everybody is pulling you and tugging you. I think I don't like that. If they let you look around like you do in your own home. Looking at the shop and they let you browse around and if you want some help you go and ask. Well they don't even let you look; as soon as you go in there they get the money out of your pocket buying the goods for you. You know it goes on and I feel uncomfortable" (UK, female 44, first visit).

Discussion

Our results demonstrate that the package tourists we interviewed do indeed participate in many kinds of activities outside of their hotels during their holidays. Generally speaking, activities outside the hotel give ISME the possibility to receive a share of tourists' spending. This research identified a wide range of factors, arguments and circumstances that influence decisions as to whether or not to use ISME. Tourists, of course, do not constitute a homogenous group, and their decisions and behavior can be influenced by a variety of factors. On the one hand, there are personality traits – such as fearfulness or timidity – and personal preferences – for example, for eating in – while, on the other, we find arguments more directly related to ISME and their offerings, range, quality standards, conduct. Among the tourists interviewed we found some who stick to one type of behavior, but others who tend to decide according to specific, or situational, needs, preferences and circumstances. A compilation of the different arguments and factors for and against ISME is presented in Fig. 3.

The personality or character traits of tourists can represent both opportunities and disadvantages for ISME but, most importantly, they are

not subject to outside influences. Other factors, however, can be influenced from outside and thus enhance opportunities for ISME, especially when dealing with those tourists who do not necessarily stick to one sole form of behavior. This influence may emerge from within the ISME the sector itself, or be triggered by other actors. Tab. 1 categorizes this wide variety of factors and arguments as representing either opportunities or disadvantages, while also identifying the actors who may influence them.

Spatial implication in comparison to Vorlauffer's model

The survey of the spatial distribution of ISME and the formal sector in the Kololi and Kotu resort areas illustrated in Fig. 1 provide grounds for a discussion of the current situation in comparison to the phases of VORLAUFER's model (1999). Unfortunately, no such survey has been carried out for these resort areas in the past, so it is not possible to analyze the area's spatial development over the phases of the resort life-cycle. As a destination, The Gambia has been defined as being in

the phase of maturity-towards-stagnation, as far as the two resorts examined are concerned, though the spatial distribution we found corresponds – at least in some respects – to the phase of maturity in *Vorlauffer's* model. Attractive properties are occupied by the formal sector, while elements of the informal sector are located either on the outskirts of the core resort area, or just outside it. Access to hawkers is banned in some areas, and classifying the restaurants established on the resorts high street is no easy task. In our view, the restaurants and larger tourist shops should be counted as ISME, whereas in *Vorlauffer's* model they are not. Keeping this discrepancy in mind the spatial distribution of these businesses is corresponding as well. The work of ASSET introduced a variation from the model, as fruit-stalls and OTG have been established in prime locations inside the resort areas, thus increasing their competitiveness. Thanks to ASSET's projects and efforts, the status of these ventures has been enhanced and they now operate legally. Although it was not possible to install fruit-stands in both resorts, they are an example of how different approaches in a multi-stakeholder process can provide access to ISME.

Fig. 3: Tourist arguments for and against the use of ISME

source: own draft

On the other hand, the results of our research on the demand side suggest that there exists demand for the services and products that the informal sector provides, even in the stage of maturity and in a mass tourism resort, and that this sector can indeed coexist alongside the formal sector. This study shows that there is a group of users and undecided among tourists at all levels of the luxury spectrum (see Fig. 3). Therefore this coexistence can lead to direct competition of the sectors to a certain extent, e.g. excursions and restaurants. This theory was acknowledged in previous studies but questioned by OPPERMANN (1993). Statements by tourists however made it clear that these services and products are not exactly the same as those used by individual tourists in the initial phase and the phase of early growth, but that the sector still has the capacity to adjust to demand and satisfy tourists' needs and expectations. Associations within this sector and the support of organizations like ASSET and other NGO may help in that process.

Perhaps in the future, best-practice, multi-stakeholder approaches like the one implemented in The Gambia will be able to (re-)establish ISMEs in resort areas on a larger scale alongside the formal sector and thus add another phase to *Vorlauffer's* model, which bases its scheme of the phases of development primarily on the market power of the tourism industry and the tourism policies adopted by governments as controlling factors. The results of our interviews indicate that tourists' demands may well support such approaches, once the informal sector has been (re-)established.

Comparability of the results

One particularly interesting question is whether or not the results of this research may offer insights into tourist destinations located in other developing countries as well. To answer this question we must first determine if The Gambia can be used as an example of mass tourism destinations more generally in developing countries.

It is certainly necessary to make a distinction between sun and sea destinations, on the one hand, and countries with more a excursion type tourism, as the circumstances and demands characteristic of the latter are quite different.

Another type of destination are cities, e.g. the metropolises of South East Asia which are the major recipients of tourist flows in these countries. In these cities tourist trade has a rather contribution to the income of the informal sector (OPPERMANN 1993). For these types it is more difficult to transfer results, and only selected aspects may turn out to be comparable. VORLAUFER (1999) distinguishes two types of sun and sea resorts. As we saw earlier, The Gambia falls into the category of the second type, due to its slower pace of development and its dualistic structure. Therefore, it is more likely that our results will be applicable to other destinations similarly classified as "type two". The premises related to the structure and spatial development of "type one" planned resorts are usually quite different, as ISME are often completely excluded from such destinations. The different structure and the distinct nature of the goods and services offered by tour operators (e.g., all-inclusive packages) influence the implementation of approaches such as the one we studied in The Gambia. Here important actors include not only hotel owners and tour operators, but also the government, which can exercise a controlling influence or power, though this particular actor was not included in our research.

On the other hand, there is the question as to whether our results concerning the behavior, decisions and attitudes of tourists can be applied to other destinations. Many of the influencing factors and attitudes that lead to decisions and behavior are not dependent on the destination (see Tab. 1 and Fig. 3). During the interviews, tourists stated that they follow similar patterns of behavior regardless of the particular destination they may have selected for their holiday. Given this point of view, it can be argued that results may well be similar at other "type two" resorts. The majority of the people we interviewed may be described as sun and sea tourists, though many also visited, or considered taking this holiday, or a future one, a destination that can be classified as a "type one" resort (e.g., Varadero, Cuba). Generally speaking, they do not have very much information about the resort while they are in the process of making their reservations and are not particularly discriminating at this stage, though they do notice differences in infrastructure and in the range of goods and services offered at the resorts they are considering. Some noticed, critically, the lack of alternative facil-

ities at other destinations that, for example, may lead to the decision to book an all-inclusive package, or the fact that security reasons make it impossible to leave the hotel and use outside facilities. These factors hinder their movement and limit both their possibilities and their accustomed behavior. They would behave in similar ways and use ISME if this were a viable alternative. Other tourists we interviewed have been described as quite receptive to the circumstances they find, leading us to assume that they adapt their behavior to the conditions they encounter upon arriving at the resort. For example, if there are no craft markets or hawkers, they may buy souvenirs in hotel shops even though visiting craft markets had proven to be an interesting activity or experience for them on previous holidays.

Therefore, it can be assumed that people's attitudes and behavior towards ISME will be comparable at similar destinations and may develop alike at other resorts, as long as the structures, standards and goods and services offered are also similar. In this scenario, our results would prove to be transferable. However, certain interfering factors may be country-specific criteria such as the security situation at a given destination and/or visitors' perceptions and stereotypes of certain countries or cultures; for example, concerning the probability of being ripped off, or the general question of reliability.

Outlook for future research

The results of our interviews give an indication of the factors that are relevant, from the consumer's point of view, to the development and success of ISME at a package holiday resort and what implications they may have for the spatial level. In this so far not particularly well studied field, our results may serve as a basis for future research on the development of ISME at a mass tourism destination and tourist behavior towards ISME; for example, at destinations with different backgrounds or those that cater to different types of tourism. Individual factors that became evident during the field research, such as the role of information, also require additional research; for example, evaluations of the impact of existing information campaigns in terms of their ability to raise people's awareness. Given that the present study focused on the demand side, it naturally

left out of its analysis formal sector, supply-side actors, including not only hotel owners and tour operators, but also the government, a potentially influential, or perhaps even controlling, power.

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