

EXPLORING THE SCOPE AND RELEVANCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE TOURISM ENTERPRISES

A Situation Analysis and Future Outlook
For Inbound Tour Operators in Thailand



NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences

BACHELOR THESIS

By Anne Baltruschat

Student ID: 082430

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism Management

Study programme: International Tourism and Travel Industry

September 2011, Breda

Commissioned by maslcontour, P.O. Box 171137, D-10203 Berlin

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

Any other contributors or sources have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and scope of their contributions.

Anne Baltruschat · September 21, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is nowadays a prominent issue for many businesses. The concept is closely related to sustainable business development, which requires companies to balance their social, environmental and economic responsibilities towards business stakeholders. In contrast to what the terminology implies, CSR is not only a concern of large corporations. It has gained increasing relevance for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), however industry-specific insights of the CSR meaning for this business type are widely lacking. This study uses the example of the tourism industry and the context of local inbound tour operators in order to explore the relevance and scope of CSR for small and medium size enterprises. Thailand provides the geographical market for this research, as the destination is one of the CSR pioneers in tourism, among developing countries.

Sustainable development in tourism was a concern long before the concept of CSR gained in popularity. The industry is largely dominated by SMEs, whose responsible business operations are often associated with the development of sustainable tourism products. The more comprehensive role of CSR has been rarely investigated in this context. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that CSR plays an increasingly important and strategic role in the tourism industry. Looking at large overseas tour operators, the majority heavily promotes and markets CSR commitment. However, the question remains, how small and medium size inbound tour operators perceive CSR. Do they fully understand the concept and its relevance? Would they agree with the formalization of activities, that they have been committed to before issues like sustainability were hyped in the industry? What are they currently doing in terms of CSR and how has CSR development influenced business operations?

These and other questions are aimed to be answered throughout this study, resulting into recommendations that provide guidance for successful CSR development in Thailand's tour operating industry.

Answers to the research problem were revealed by means of a qualitative research approach, which was conducted in two steps. Firstly, desk research was employed by means of a comprehensive literature review that answers the following research questions:

1. What are the relevant theoretical frames in order to basically outline the CSR concept?
2. How is CSR linked to sustainable tourism development? What role has the concept played in the overall tourism industry yet and what does theory indicate on the future development of CSR?
3. What is known about the meaning of CSR in the tour operating industry? What differences have to be considered between large and small/medium size tour operators?
4. How far is the geographical market of Thailand developed in terms of CSR? What can be found on particular CSR-issues and -development in the tour operating Industry?

The CSR concept goes back to theories on the management of stakeholders and the responsibilities towards them. Therefore, the concepts of stakeholder theory, business responsibilities and CSR motivations provide the theoretical framework. Besides, the established link between sustainable tourism and CSR will be commonly referred back to throughout this research. Eventually, the importance of performance standards and certification was identified as a relevant theory for this study.

While the literature review provides a comprehensive picture of the research background, field research was employed to reveal insights into an industry that, to the researcher's best knowledge, had not been academically explored in this context before. Primary data was gathered by means of nine in-depth interviews with small and medium size inbound tour operators. The interviews were held during a month-long research period in Thailand, which enhanced the researcher's understanding and expertise for the topic. Interview data was transcribed and analyzed in accordance with the research questions. Thereby, emergent themes were assigned to the correlated research questions in order to maintain a clear and meaningful structure of the research results. The outcomes of this study address the following research questions:

1. How do small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand understand the concept of CSR?
2. To what types of CSR activities do small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand commit to and what relevance do these activities have for the business?
3. Which motivation for CSR commitment of small and medium size inbound tour operators can be identified?
4. What issues can be recognized in the context of the tour operators' CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations and how do they affect the future development of CSR?
5. What can be said about the strategic relevance of CSR and what does that mean for the future development of CSR?

In conclusion, it was revealed that the concept of CSR does not yet play a significant role for small and medium size tour operators in Thailand. Based on the conception, activities and motivations for CSR three major issues were identified:

1. *Limitations in the conception of CSR:* Although Thailand's local tour operators are strong advocates of sustainable tourism and according business practices, the terminology of CSR causes a certain degree of aversion. CSR is often connoted with the intention to misuse sustainability principles for marketing advantages. Nevertheless, tour operators need to face the issue that genuine activism does not make sustainable business operations viably work in the long-term.
2. *Irrelevance of performance standards:* Responsibilities and the maintenance of business-stakeholder relationships are essential for small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand. Nevertheless, activities are mainly rooted in individual principles and standards, which lead to the conclusion that a credible performance is unlikely to be communicated. Furthermore, the companies commonly face the issue that outcomes of CSR-activities are hardly measurable. The CSR-MAP criteria have not been relevant for any of the tour operators yet.

3. *Conflict between market and supply side:* Thailand's small and medium size tour operators have a problem in placing their tour products in the market. Reasons for this were found at various levels: high product prices, the reluctance of overseas operators to purchase products and lacking knowledge about appropriate market targeting and product marketing. Communication is the key problem that impedes a prosperous market-supplier relationship.

In order to address the above problems, CSR reporting was determined as a key solution. Nevertheless, certain conditions have not been met in the industry, yet. Therefore, a number of steps to fulfill prerequisites for implementation of CSR reporting and subsequently, a certification scheme are highly recommended:

- The implementation of an effective CSR reporting system should be prioritized, in order to successfully address the B2B marketing channel.
- A critical review and assessment of the CSR performance standards is strongly advised, in order to enhance the relevance and applicability for local tour operators.
- Realistic indicators for the assessment of performance standards are recommended to be developed, in order to enhance the relevance and applicability for local tour operators.
- Meaningful opportunities for education and communication should be created, in order to make formal CSR approaches more tangible and appealing to local tour operators.
- Possibilities for effective cooperation with the government (TAT) should be proposed, in order to encourage financial and promotional support for the suggested initiatives.

PREFACE

Originally, the idea of the bachelor thesis is to bundle the competencies, skills and interests that a student has developed throughout those three years of studying. Although I truly believe that this has been accomplished with my thesis, I found myself becoming increasingly interested in my thesis topic not even a year ago. Tourism is quite a diverse field of study, dealing with topics from all sorts of backgrounds. Therefore, it is easy and challenging at the same time to choose a topic of interest and relevance. Nevertheless, there is one issue, which I believe, should play a key role in the present and future development of tourism and this is sustainability.

While I have repeatedly come across the ideas of sustainable tourism or eco-travel throughout my studies, the concept of CSR in tourism was new to me, when I attended my first minor class in Sustainable Tourism Development. CSR is interesting in this respect, that it is quite a new name for something that has been around in the tourism industry for much longer. Nevertheless, CSR has increasingly gained reputation as strategic management tool, opposed to the rather moral intentions with which sustainability was pursued in the past. Growing numbers of companies jump on the bandwagon and have made sustainability a competitive battle field.

I decided to focus on a tourism industry segment, which has not been explored very well in the context of CSR, namely small and medium size enterprises. Hoping to disclose a row of “fundamentally new” findings, I eventually realized that this might not have been the accomplishment of this paper. Instead, this thesis gave me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge on sustainability issues, to practice and improve my research abilities and eventually, to complete my three-year bachelor study in International Tourism Management. At this point, I am happy to present my ideas and findings of this research and hope that the outcome will have some reasonable value for Thailand’s tour operating industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To be fair, this thesis was not always an easy undertaking. Nevertheless, I am proud to present the final outcome of my studies, which would not have been possible without a number of people. Therefore, it is a pleasure to thank those who contributed to this study in a lot of different ways.

First of all, I would like to thank Mrs. Nicole Häusler for the opportunity to complete this thesis in my desired area of research. Her contacts and knowledge in the field greatly supported this study and made conversations with experts of Thailand's tour operating industry possible. I highly appreciate their interest and time to share experiences and knowledge regarding the issue of CSR. I hope this study will contribute in some way to Thailand's sustainable tourism development.

Kop khun kha and thank you, Mrs. Duangakomol Chansuriyawong, TEATA, Mr. George M.J. Colin, N.S. Travel & Tours Co., Ltd., Mrs. Emily Kerger, Exotissimo Travel Thailand, Mr. Andrew Lewis, Educational Travel Center Co., Ltd., Mr. Kanaruj Mingmethaporn, CBT-I, Mr. Carl Needham, Intrepid (Thailand) Ltd., Mr. Alberto C. de la Paz, PDA Tour (All North Ltd.), Mrs. Supaporn Prach-Umpai, Royal Silk Holidays Co., Ltd., Mr. Peter Richards, CBT-I, Mr. Stephen Salmon, Phu Phiang Co., Ltd., Mrs. Veena Savetphanu, Asian Oasis Co., Ltd., Mr. Nithi Subhongsang, Ayutthaya Boat & Travel, Mr. Saksri Thepchayutimon, Asian Oasis Co., Ltd.

Furthermore, I would like to thank two lecturers from the NTHV: firstly, my supervisor Mr. Ronald Raadsheer, who, although he had a rather brief chance to assist me in my thesis, I am grateful to for his time, cooperation and positive energies that brought me back on the right track. Besides, I am thankful for the support from Mrs. Lilian Wanderley, who took time to discuss research ideas and issues, which eventually lead me to my first ideas of the thesis topic.

Ultimately, I am grateful to Josephin Sachs, Anja Krause and Soula Tsiggiavuridou, Nora Heinevetter, Fabio Baum and my family. Thank you for being so extremely patient and supportive during the past seven months. I am glad to have you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	III
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	IV
PREFACE	VII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, TABLES AND MODELS	1
1 · INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND	2
1.1.1 ISSUES AND QUESTIONS	3
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM	3
1.2.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL MARKET	4
1.2.2 THE COMMISSIONER	4
1.3 RESEARCH AIM	5
1.3.2 EXPECTED RESULTS AND BENEFITS	5
1.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND STRUCTURE	5
1.4.1 TYPE OF RESEARCH	5
1.4.2 THESIS STRUCTURE	5
2 · METHODOLOGY	7
2.1 DESK RESEARCH	7
2.2 FIELD RESEARCH	8
2.2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING	8
2.2.2 DATA COLLECTION	10
2.2.3 DATA ANALYSIS	11
2.2.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	11
3 · THEORETICAL CSR FRAMEWORK	13
3.1 DEFINING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	13
3.2 STAKEHOLDER THEORY	14
3.2.1 THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS	14
3.2.2 STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT	15
3.3 BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITIES	15
3.4 MOTIVATIONS FOR CSR	17
3.5 CONCLUSION	17

4 · CSR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY	18
4.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	18
4.1.1 DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM	18
4.1.2 FORMS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM	19
4.2 THE LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CSR	19
4.2.1 LIMITATIONS OF CSR IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY	20
4.2.2 CSR AS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES	20
4.3 STANDARDS, REPORTING AND CERTIFICATION	21
4.3.1 THE EXAMPLE OF TOUR CERT	21
4.4 THE TOUR OPERATING INDUSTRY	23
4.4.1 INDUSTRY STRUCTURE	23
4.4.2 COMPARING DIFFERENT BUSINESS TYPES IN THE CONTEXT OF CSR	23
4.5 CONCLUSION	25
5 · THE GEOGRAPHICAL MARKET OF THAILAND	27
5.1 THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	27
5.2 CSR AS MARKETING STRATEGY	27
5.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT	28
5.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS	29
5.4 THE CSR AND MARKET ACCESS PARTNERSHIP PROJECT	29
5.4.1 SPECIFIC CSR ISSUES	31
5.5 CONCLUSION	31
6 · RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS	32
6.1 INTRODUCTION	32
6.2 CONTEXTUAL REMARKS	32
6.3 CSR CONCEPTION AND ISSUES	33
6.3.1 CSR TERMINOLOGY	33
6.3.2 LIMITATIONS TO CSR TERMINOLOGY	34
6.4 CSR ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES	35
6.4.1 THE ROLE OF THE TOUR PRODUCT	36
6.4.2 STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT	36
6.4.3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	37
6.4.4 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	39
6.4.5 EMPLOYEE RIGHTS	40
6.4.6 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND EDUCATION	40
6.4.7 REVIEWING THE CSR-MAP PROJECT	41
6.5 CSR MOTIVATIONS AND ISSUES	42
6.5.1 MORAL MOTIVATIONS	42
6.5.2 STRATEGIC MOTIVATIONS	43

7 · SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	47
7.1 INTRODUCTION	47
7.2 THE CURRENT CSR SITUATION	47
7.3 SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES	48
7.3.1 LIMITATIONS IN THE CONCEPTION OF CSR	48
7.3.2 IRRELEVANCE OF PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	49
7.3.3 CONFLICT BETWEEN MARKET AND SUPPLY SIDE	49
7.4 THE STRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF CSR	49
7.4.1 CSR-REPORTING AS A REQUIREMENT	50
7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	51
7.5.1 OBJECTIVES TO BE REACHED	51
7.5.2 RECOMMENDATION 1	51
7.5.3 RECOMMENDATION 2	51
7.5.4 RECOMMENDATION 3	52
7.5.5 RECOMMENDATION 4	52
7.5.6 RECOMMENDATION 5	52
7.5.7 INDICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	53
7.5.8 FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR THE TOUR OPERATING INDUSTRY	53
REFERENCES	54
APPENDIX	59
A.1 WEBSITE ANALYSES	59
A.1.1 TUI TRAVEL PLC AND THOMAS COOK GROUP PLC	59
A.1.2 RESEARCH SAMPLE	59
A.2 MODELS	60
A.2.1 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CSR FOR TOUR OPERATORS	60
A.2.2 FOUR-PART MODEL OF CSR	61
A.3 INTERVIEW TOPIC LIST	61
A.4 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS	62
A.4.1 COMPANY 1	62
A.4.2 COMPANY 2	64
A.4.3 COMPANY 3	67
A.4.4 COMPANY 4	70
A.4.5 COMPANY 5	72
A.4.6 COMPANY 6	74
A.4.7 COMPANY 7	77
A.4.8 COMPANY 8	79
A.4.9 COMPANY 9	82

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, TABLES AND MODELS

CBT-I	Community Based Tourism Institute
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FTT	Fair Trade in Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
INFTT	The International Network on Fair Trade in Tourism
ITB	Internationale Tourismus Börse
SME	Small and Medium Size Enterprise
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TEATA	Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism Association
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
Table 1:	Research sample of SME inbound tour operators
Table 2:	CSR requirements for the private tourism sector
Table 3:	8 consecutive steps towards CSR-reporting/certification
Table 4:	Extract from Sustainable Thai Tour Operator Standards
Table 5:	Objectives for the future development of CSR
Table 6:	Website analysis of two large transnational tour operators
Model 1:	Factors that influence CSR for tour operators
Model 2:	Four-part model of CSR

1 · INTRODUCTION

The first chapter provides an introduction into the research topic of CSR and places it in the relevant context of small and medium size tour operators in Thailand. Based on this analysis, the research problem and research are presented. Finally, the chapter outlines the methodological approach, characteristics of the research process and gives an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The belief that companies hold certain responsibilities towards the society is as present as never before within the global economy. “Triggered by political, economic or environmental changes [...]” (Grayson & Hodges, 2004), increasing numbers of businesses have become active in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The concept of CSR emphasizes that business responsibilities go beyond the interest of profit making and instead embrace “social, economic and environmental demands” (Jenkins, 2006) by means of sustainability. Nevertheless, CSR is widely perceived as an additional duty, unless the company is driven by moral or ethical beliefs to do business “in the right way”. Instead, strategic concerns are often the more convincing argument. An increasing awareness of CSR is caused by, for example, external pressures or the idea that CSR implies business benefits such as cost savings, an enhanced reputation or other competitive advantages.

However, is this also applicable for the tourism industry, where sustainability has already been an issue since 1996, when the World Tourism Organization firstly defined sustainable tourism (UNWTO, n.d.)? In an industry like tourism, concerns about society, economy and the environment started to appear on business agendas, since mass tourism development had heavily impacted many tourism destinations. Especially tour operators are highly dependent on intact destinations in order to successfully create and sell their tour products. Therefore, sustainable tourism development was recognized early to be the only way “that has the potential to change the nature of tourism” (Butler, 1999). However, given the increasing relevance of CSR in the tourism industry and an accordingly growing market of responsible travelers, reasons for a more strategic meaning of CSR in tourism become evident.

Kalisch (2001), who examined CSR in the context of large transnational tour companies in the UK, argues that “social and economic responsibility, as part of destination management, provide a useful and profitable tool for the tourism industry to fulfill its sustainable development role” (p. 8). In contrast, concepts like sustainable tourism or responsible tourism, which comprise the same principles as CSR (Monshausen & Fuchs, 2010, p. 4), originally do not suggest strategic intentions. Instead, they are “small-scale, environmentally and culturally appropriate forms of tourism” (Butler, 1999, p. 13), which offer a considerate alternative to mass tourism products without the intention to be an reasonably profitable source of income or a similar competitive advantage.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that CSR play an increasingly important and more strategic role in the tourism industry. “CSR has reached the mainstream tourism industry” and “more and more travel and tourism enterprises now report on their social and environmental activities for responsible and sustainable tourism” (Monshausen et al., 2010). Looking at large tour operators, the majority of them actively promote CSR efforts on their websites, including numerous policies, guidelines, standards and reports. The tourism industry is largely dominated by small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). As opposed to the concept of CSR, which had been the domain of large companies and corporations for many years, nowadays CSR has become relevant for any size of business (Jenkins, 2006). Nevertheless, characteristics of privately owned and smaller businesses certainly distinguish their CSR understanding from that of corporate businesses. Additionally, responsible business operations of smaller tour operators are often associated with eco-tourism development. The more comprehensive concept of CSR has been rarely investigated in this context.

1.1.1 Issues and questions

However, how do smaller businesses, in particular tour operators that operate directly in the destination, perceive CSR? Do they fully understand the concept and its relevance? Would they agree with the formalization of measures, that they have been committed to before issues like sustainability have been hyped in the industry? What are they currently doing in terms of CSR and how has CSR development influenced business operations? Are they aware of the shared value of responsible business operations or is there just this genuine belief in preventing destinations from negative tourism impacts?

“Privately held businesses may not be conducting the expensive campaigns that catch the public’s attention, but they are making changes which affect their bottom line. Whether changes are made to be a more attractive employer, a more appealing supplier to a large multinational or simply because of the ethical desire of the owner, all the evidence [...] points to privately held businesses becoming more socially responsible.”

Grant Thornton, 2008

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Theory on CSR has been widely applied to corporations and larger companies, while only during recent years the concept has gained particular relevance for SMEs. Therefore, a need for studies about this business type is evident. Jenkins (2006) especially acknowledges the need for sector-specific insights. However, also in the tourism industry, CSR has been particularly explored in the context of large transnational tour operating companies (Kalisch, 2001; Miller, 2001). These studies provide valuable insights into the CSR concept and motivational factors of CSR commitment, and certainly allow conclusions on the relevance of strategic CSR.

However, the link between CSR and strategy is not only evident in larger companies, as one would assume. An example from Germany shows, that strategic CSR is certainly a concern of smaller tour operators too. A German network of small sustainable tour operators recently introduced CSR reporting guidelines as well as a certification scheme in order to enhance the transparency and credibility of their members' CSR involvement (forum anders reisen e. V., 2010).

Nevertheless, as the above findings commonly refer to overseas tour operators, they ignore a crucial aspect of CSR in the tourism industry: the operators' proximity to the destination, which is assumed to result into a greater awareness of social and environmental issues, a different conception of CSR and consequently the question if strategic concerns are even relevant in this sector? All in all, there is a lack of academic studies on CSR in the context of small and medium size inbound tour operations. The context of a developing country adds depth to the study, as industry- and destination-specific circumstances are assumed to influence CSR theory and practice.

1.2.1 The geographical market

Thailand, as a tourism destination where irresponsible tourism development has widely left its negative footprints, was chosen as the geographical market for this study. Thailand's public and private tourism entities are increasingly concerned with sustainable tourism development and CSR. According to the commissioner, Thailand is one of the pioneers in CSR matters among developing countries. The public as well as the private sector have emphasized the issue of CSR since 2010, even though for different reasons. While the government uses CSR mainly as a marketing tool to enhance its image as green tourism destination, small and medium size tour operators were recently involved in a project "to improve market access by developing new sustainable tourism standards and products" (TEATA, GLF, CBT-I, & ECEAT, 2010)¹.

However, other than that, information about the tour operating sector and CSR is lacking. Looking at other tourism-related studies on CSR in Thailand, the hotel sector is mainly considered. One exemplary study reveals that the important question for Thai hotel operators is not anymore how they understand CSR, but how "[they] incorporate [CSR] into practice, as well as measure and report on CSR performance" (Boonkaew, Polonsky, & Pearlman, 2006). Similar studies, that picture the concept in the tour operating sector do not exist to the researcher's best of knowledge.

1.2.2 The commissioner

The thesis is commissioned by *maslcontour*, a Berlin-based consultancy and communication firm, which specializes in sustainable tourism development and related issues, such as CSR.

¹ Cf. 5.4 The CSR and Market Access Partnership Project

1.3 RESEARCH AIM

Studying Thailand's small and medium size inbound tour operators in the context of CSR aims to provide the reader with an industry-specific insight into the scope and relevance of the CSR concept. This study seeks to identify present issues in the context of the tour operators' CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations. Besides, it is aimed to explore the strategic relevance of CSR. In the light of these findings, recommendations for the future CSR development in this industry will be given.

1.3.2 Expected results and benefits

This study aims to provide insights into the conception of CSR in tourism, looking at an industry sector, where CSR is a rather unknown concept. Findings are assumed to indicate the relevance of CSR as well as to disclose problems and opportunities for the future development of CSR. The findings will be important in order to understand where CSR generally stands at, to explore the strategic relevance of CSR and to outline what can be done to support the sustainable business development of small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand. Therefore, the outcomes should provide inspiration and the foundation for a dialogue between external consultancy firms, like *maslcontour*, and relevant stakeholders of the industry, in order to stimulate and foster the future development of CSR in the industry.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND STRUCTURE

1.4.1 Type of research

Given the nature of the research topic, this study has a descriptive character. Descriptive research aims to "discover, describe or map patterns of behavior in areas which have not previously been studied" (Veal, 2006, p. 3). It provides insights into a subject that has not been explored in a particular context and is therefore often referred to as exploratory research. As this research aims to explore CSR and its relevance in the sector of small and medium size inbound tour operators, to the researcher's best knowledge no research has been conducted yet. Although CSR has been investigated in the context of local hotel operations in Thailand and strategic approaches can be seen in small size operators in industrialized countries, perceptions and opinions on CSR and strategy are largely unexplored in the local tour operating sector of a developing country, such as Thailand.

1.4.2 Thesis structure

The core of this thesis consists of seven chapters and two additional chapters, including references and the appendix.

- Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the topic of this thesis, summarizing the research background, research problem, research aim and expected benefits as well as the methodological approach.

- Chapter 2 provides details about the methodology and research methods. It briefly outlines desk research methods, while field research methods are illustrated in more detail. Both paragraphs contain a set of relevant research questions. The field research outline contains information about the qualitative research method, including the population, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis as well as research limitations.
- Chapter 3 deals with the main theories of CSR, which were determined as relevant for the research topic. It includes the concepts of stakeholder theory, business responsibilities, CSR motivations and their applicability in the study context.
- Chapter 4 focuses firstly on general CSR developments in the tourism industry and discusses the link between sustainable tourism and CSR, the strategic relevance of CSR as well as the issue of CSR certification. Secondly, the state-of-the-art of the tour operating industry is presented. The analysis focuses on typical industry structures and the comparison of large and small/medium size tour operators in the context of CSR.
- Chapter 5 provides insights into the geographical market of Thailand and discusses any relevant developments and issues, such as the role of CSR for the public and the private tourism sector. All in all, the above chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide the theoretical framework for this study.
- Chapter 6 presents the results of the first three research questions, structure according to the topics of CSR-conception, -activities and-motivations. It reveals issues and concerns ,which are summarized as conclusions in the following chapter.
- Chapter 7 summarizes the overall research findings and addresses the five field research questions. Based on the discussion, recommendations for CSR development the tourism industry are given. Besides, indications for further research are given. The chapter concludes with a statement on the future outlook of CSR for small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand.

2 · METHODOLOGY

The second chapter introduces the reader to the research methods of this study. While the desk research process will be briefly examined, research methods in the field are illustrated in detail, including the sampling procedure, processes of data collection and analysis as well as a discussion of research limitations and methodological drawbacks.

2.1 DESK RESEARCH

Desk research was employed in order to build up a theoretical framework which guided the research design and process. It is usually concerned with the analysis of already existing theories and information, either published or unpublished. Thereby, literature as well as secondary data can either provide “the entire basis of the research problem, the source of ideas on [research topics] or a source of methodological or theoretical ideas” (Veal, 2006, p. 121).

In the context of this study, the research problem and theoretical framework were developed on the basis of a comprehensive literature review. The main sources of information included the NHTV library catalogue, bibliographies of published articles and papers around the topic of CSR, as well as tourism databases and relevant websites. At certain points, secondary data was used to illustrate concepts and ideas with help of statistics.

Additionally, a website analysis of different tour operating companies was conducted. The purpose of this was to contrast large transnational outbound companies and small and medium size inbound tour operators in order to show the differences, particularly in the context of CSR communication. Thereby, firstly the websites of two large companies were briefly assessed, based on individually determined criteria. Secondly, the companies of the research sample were analyzed, resulting in a brief summary of their online CSR communication².

Desk research questions:

1. What are the relevant theoretical frames in order to outline the CSR concept?
2. How is CSR linked to sustainable tourism development? What role has the concept played in the overall tourism industry yet and what does theory indicate on the future development of CSR?
3. What is known about the meaning of CSR in the tour operating industry? What differences have to be considered between large and small/medium size tour operators?
4. How far is the geographical market of Thailand developed in terms of CSR? What can be found on particular CSR-issues and –development in the tour operating industry?

² Cf. A.1 Website analyses

2.2 FIELD RESEARCH

For the field research process, a qualitative research method was chosen, which is generally described as the “gathering of large amounts of relatively detailed information about relatively few cases” (Veal, 2006, p. 99). In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative methods encourage people to impartially share their opinions and experiences regarding the subject to be researched, rather than “being overly constrained by the [researcher’s framework]” (opt. cit., p. 193). This way, the researcher is able to “to identify a full range of issues, views and attitudes” (Peterson, 1994; as cited in Veal, 2006, p.195), which can be later linked to the conceptual framework. Qualitative research methods are particularly useful in areas, where not a large amount of information has been gathered yet and consequently the need for extensive and detailed information is given.

Overall, qualitative studies are commonly characterized by a recursive research approach, where conceptualization, data collection, data analysis and writing are no consecutive steps, but become blurred in the research process (Veal, 2006, p.196). Thereby, the conceptualization “evolves as the research progresses, data analysis and collection take place concurrently; and writing is often an evolutionary, on-going process (ibid.).

Field research questions:

1. *CSR conception*: How do small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand understand the concept of CSR?
2. *CSR activities*: To what types of CSR activities do small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand commit to and what relevance do these activities have for the business?
3. *CSR motivations*: Which motivation for CSR commitment of small and medium size inbound tour operators can be identified?
4. What issues can be recognized in the context of the tour operators’ CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations and how do they affect the future development of CSR?
5. What can be said about the strategic relevance of CSR and what does that mean for the future development of CSR?

2.2.1 Population and sampling

Defining the population

The population represents the total of study units, which the research is focusing on” (Jennings, 2001). This study focuses on small and medium size inbound tour operators³ in Thailand, organizing and selling tours to foreign incoming tourists. As a matter of diverse industry- and business structures, a universal definition of SMES does not exist, however the classification according to the companies’ turnover or headcount is common. Nevertheless, a definition based on turnover statistics implies methodological drawbacks, so that employee numbers are considered most suitable to classify SMEs in this study.

³ Note: Any mentioning of the term *tour operator* throughout this study refers to inbound operations, if not indicated differently.

The European Union (2005) defines SMEs as follows: Medium size enterprises employ up to 250 staff, small size enterprises have a maximum of 50 employees and the microenterprise has a headcount of maximum 10 people.

As any population in most cases is too large to be fully studied, researchers usually employ a sample. Sampling describes the method of selecting a smaller number of units from the overall population, of which data is gathered. Given limitations in research time and budget mostly allow only small numbers of non-representative cases (Veal, 2006). They intend “to present a working picture of the broader social structure from which the observations are drawn” (Henderson, 1991; as cited in Veal, 2006, p. 294).

Sampling procedure

Qualitative research is characterized by non-probability sampling where not every individual has an equal chance to be selected (Jennings, 2001). The present sample was determined by means of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves the researcher’s deliberate decision about the study units that will be selected, based on certain circumstances or criteria. Furthermore, it lies in the researcher’s sense to decide “when enough units [...] have been sampled” (ibid.).

For this study a single criterion was determined: All relevant tour operators need to have previous experience in sustainable tourism operations by means of offering types of ecotourism products. This criterion was determined, as this study aims to explore what has been done in terms of CSR in the industry, so that experienced tour operators were most useful.

In correspondence with the commissioner, a sample size of 10 tour operators was determined in order to be considered sufficient and to present meaningful picture of CSR in Thailand’s small and medium size inbound tour operating industry. Besides, the scope of this study did not allow for any larger samples. The sample units were chosen from a self-composed list of contact information, provided by three reliable sources: the commissioner’s network, the CBT-I members list and the TEATA members list. Furthermore, the *Internationale Tourismus Börse* (ITB), which took place on March 9-13, 2011, provided a platform to approach and contact relevant tour operators.

In total, 28 potential companies were contacted. All companies were approached by e-mail first and later followed up by means of e-mail or personal visits in their local offices in Thailand. Ten companies agreed to participate in the interviews, of which one had to be cancelled due to time constraints. However, in order to minimize the effects of this unforeseen research limitation, one expert interview (CSR-MAP project) was integrated in the regular company interview and took place as part of a meeting of sustainability experts.

Company	Business size	Interviewee	Language
Ayutthaya Boat & Travel	Microenterprise	Owner-Manager	English
ETC Travel	Small size	Sales Manager	English
Intrepid (Thailand)	Small size	General Manager	English
N.S. Travel	Medium size	Manager Inbound	English
Asian Oasis	Small size	Marketing Manager	English
PDA Tours	Microenterprise	Managing Director	English
Phu Phiang Travel	Microenterprise	Owner-Manager	English
Royal Silk Holidays	Small size	Managing Director	English
Exotissimo Travel Thailand	Medium size	Intern CSR	German

Table 1: Research sample of SME inbound tour operators (Own composition, 2011)

2.2.2 Data collection

Research technique

Semi-structured in-depth and expert interviews were chosen as the preferred technique for data collection in the field. This type of interview is usually “fluid in nature and follows the thinking process of the interviewee” (Jennings, 2001), rather than sticking to a set structure. As the research aims to explore attitudes and issues of CSR that have not been studied in that specific context, this flexible approach is highly suitable. Interviewees are stimulated to bring up individual issues and ideas, which highly benefits the exploratory research process. Furthermore, the interviews’ length and depth assure a rich amount of information. An in-depth interview “typically takes about half an hour and may extend over several hours” and will be usually tape recorded and transcribed (Veal, 2006, p. 198).

The length of the interviews for this study varied from 25 to 70 minutes, depending on the availability of interviewees as well as the interview progress. All conversations were tape-recorded in accordance with the respondents. The interviews were preferably conducted with the managing directors or owner-managers when available; however in four cases other employees in different management positions and one intern from the CSR-department were interviewed. The experts were representatives of the sustainable tourism organizations CBT-I and TEATA⁴. The interviews were held between April 6-28, 2011 at different locations in Bangkok, Chiang Rai and Ayutthaya.

Research instrument

In contrast to questionnaire-based interviews, in-depth interviews are “guided by a checklist of topics rather than a formal questionnaire” (Veal, 2006, p. 198). The list usually includes all relevant topics by means of key words. The topics need to be covered throughout the interview; however the researcher has to keep the structure flexible.

⁴ Cf. 5.3 Sustainable Tourism Organizations

Furthermore, open-ended questions are an important criterion for in-depth interviews, as they on the one hand, allow the respondents to express their ideas and thoughts individually and on the other hand, provide the researcher with a rich amount of information.

In order to assure a smooth introduction to the interviews, the topic list was adapted prior to every interview based on the available information on CSR/sustainable tourism of each company that was found online. Nevertheless, the general structure of the four main sections was maintained. While section I, asking the respondents about their sustainable tourism products and customers, provides the introduction, the other sections aim to address the first three research questions⁵. Section II explores the CSR conception of the respondents, asking how they understand CSR. Section III aim to investigate, if and how CSR has influenced the way of doing business. Additionally, this sections deals with the topics of stakeholder relationships and CSR activities. Finally, section IV seeks to reveal the motivations that underlie CSR commitment and aims to disclose the tour operators' opinions on the shared value of CSR as well as the factors that may influence CSR in their businesses.

2.2.3 Data analysis

In order to provide a common basis for a thorough analysis, all interview recordings were transferred into verbatim transcripts. Thereby, the names of companies and organizations were replaced by fictitious names in order to assure confidentiality, as some of the companies expressed their concern about being cited.

Resulting from the data collection, the gathered information needs to be analyzed in a sufficient and systematic manner. Thereby it is important to establish and emphasize a relation to the conceptual framework and research questions (Veal, 2006, p. 210). The qualitative information was analyzed with help of emergent themes (ibid.). Each interview was individually coded according to the key topics (CSR conception, CSR activities, CSR motivations) and its respective sub-topics⁶. Thereby, relevant information was linked with the emergent themes and supported by the researcher's comments and notes.

2.2.4 Research limitations

Qualitative research method

Choosing a qualitative interview technique as research method does imply certain theoretical and practical drawbacks. Results are typically non-representative and limited in their applicability to a broader population. Therefore, the outcomes are mostly used to indicate certain directions or developments and can provide a basis for consecutive studies. Moreover, qualitative research methods hardly follow a homogenous approach, which requires the researcher to carefully outline the research design in order to assure that data is handled correctly. Additionally, qualitative research is lacking validity and reliability to a certain degree.

⁵ The latter research questions are answered by drawing the legitimate conclusions.

⁶ Cf. Appendix A.3 Interview topic list

With regard to the actual interview process, the researcher needs to be aware of certain conditions. As mentioned earlier, in-depth interviews are not firmly structured and allow the desired amount and depth of information. Nevertheless, the interviewer is required to maintain a flexible but complete topic list and to lead the conversation, even though the respondent is encouraged to talk freely. Besides, the researcher needs to avoid agreeing or disagreeing with the interviewees in order to avoid biased information. The researcher has experience in qualitative interview from a former research project, which is an advantage in dealing with the above limitations.

Research set-up in Thailand

As the field research took place in Thailand, several circumstances had to be dealt with. Firstly, interviews were arranged within a rather short time frame of one month, increasing the risk that time is not sufficient in order to reschedule and substitute postponed or cancelled interviews. Therefore, the researcher had to ensure that adequate alternatives were available. As this unfortunately happened once, a second expert interview could be arranged. Secondly, the commissioner already advised, that potential interviewees might have problems with the English language, which requires a careful set-up and conduction of the interviews in order to avoid mistaken information.

A third research limitation in Thailand was the availability of interview partners. Although the researcher intended to interview the managing directors or owner-managers, in five out of nine cases interviewees from different positions took part in the research. This bares the risk that not enough insights or knowledge are provided. Moreover, regardless the position of the respondents, the research assumes that employees do lack objectivity and therefore information might be biased. In order to compensate this circumstance and assure a certain degree of objectivity, a critical evaluation throughout the analysis was enforced.

3 · THEORETICAL CSR FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for this study. It introduces the reader to the terminology of CSR and outlines its theoretical frames. These include the concepts of stakeholder theory, business responsibilities and CSR motivations. Eventually, these concepts are linked to the overall research problem in order to clarify their relevance.

3.1 DEFINING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

With the ever growing importance of CSR, research and practice have led to an endless number of interpretations, which makes it difficult to agree on a common definition. The understanding largely depends on the industry as well as the individual business. All definitions commonly emphasize that businesses have responsibilities that go beyond the financial interests of shareholders or investors of a company.

Businesses do have an economic responsibility. As Friedman (1970), one of the most prominent opponents of CSR, argues, „the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits“. And indeed, the company’s responsibility to stay profitable in the interest of its shareholders or employees is part of the overall CSR concept. Nevertheless, at one point responsibilities besides economic interests grew in importance. Business impacts on society, such as the exploitation of natural and social resources, required „radical re-thinking“ of doing business and resulted into the concept of sustainability (Crane & Matten, 2007, p. 21).

Sustainability or sustainable development „refers to the long-term maintenance of systems according to environmental, economic and social considerations“ (ibid.). In this context, the triple bottom line (TBL) has become a illustrative model of what CSR means. It describes the need of companies to not only add economic value to their business operations, but also environmental and social value (Elkington; as cited in Crane et al., 2007, p. 23). Both, the concepts of sustainability and TBL underline the main goal of CSR: balancing social, environmental and economic responsibilities of the business.

While sustainability is an important element of CSR, it does not cover the full extent of the concept. The Commission of the European Communities (2001) considers besides the areas of responsibilities other important elements of CSR. It defines CSR as a “concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (ibid.).

Referring to the above framework of definitions, the most applicable CSR definition for this study includes the following characteristics: the importance of stakeholders and the business-stakeholder relationship; social, environmental and economic business responsibilities and the strategic alignment CSR activities and business operations.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER THEORY

As outlined above, the European Commission (2001) defines the interaction with stakeholders as one of the main CSR principles. Consequently, stakeholder theory is a commonly discussed CSR concept and builds the foundation for any CSR-related discussion. It identifies stakeholders and their interests as crucial to the overall business success and emphasizes the business-stakeholder relationship. Matten and Cranes (2003) define stakeholder theory as “a necessary process in the operationalization of CSR”(as cited in Branco & Rodrigues, 2007, p.5).

3.2.1 The role of stakeholders

The stakeholder view goes back to the 1980's, when the interests of stakeholders were firstly recognized as equally important as those of shareholders. Up to this point, shareholders accounted for the single most important interest group of many businesses and their interest in profit maximization had priority in management decisions. Edward Freeman firstly disputed this limited view in 1984, claiming that certain stakeholders are “essential to the very survival and prosperity of the enterprise and require a strategic management approach (Blowfield & Murray, 2008, p. 161). Nevertheless, this proposition has been criticized for its limitation to only consider parties that could be of harm to the company's operations. Consequently, more contemporary theories have evolved, indicating that companies need to recognize and respond to the “demands of [all of their] constituents, including employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and local communities” (Blowfield & Murray, 2008, p. 161).

Freeman (1984) identifies stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives” (as cited in Cranes & Matten, 2007, p. 57). This concept was further refined by Freeman and Evan (1993), suggesting that a stakeholder “is harmed by, or benefit from the [company] or whose rights can be violated or have to be respected by the [company]” (op. cit., p. 58). All in all, literature provides “66 different concepts for the term stakeholder” (Mainardes *et al.*, 2010), underlining the complexity of this concept. Nevertheless, Freeman (2009) argues that theoretical definitions are secondary and instead, it is rather important “to understand how the value creation process works in a business”. Based on this notion, he identifies two different stakeholder groups; on the one hand “primary or definitional stakeholders” and on the other hand groups that impact these primary business-stakeholder relationships.

1. Primary stakeholders are customers, suppliers, employees, communities and shareholders.
2. Groups that impact primary business-stakeholder relationships are identified as the government, media, NGOs, interest groups, environmentalist and critics.

In the context of this study, stakeholders can be identified as groups, which are affected in a beneficial or detrimental way by a company's operations. At the same time, stakeholders do provide certain advantages or disadvantages for the business. In most of the cases, business-stakeholder relationships are two-sided. This bilateral nature will be increasingly emphasized throughout the paper and also considered in the following.

3.2.2 Stakeholder management

Overall, Freeman's findings are fundamental to understand CSR, as they acknowledge the new role of a wider range of stakeholders in the management context. Stakeholder management emphasizes the relationship between business and stakeholders and requires companies to understand and enter these relationships (Jones and Wicks, 1999; Savage, Dunkin and Ford, 2004; as cited in Mainardes *et al.*, 2010).

The business-stakeholder relationship is characterized by the influence of stakeholders. Hill and Jones (1992) stress the element of exchange in those relationships, meaning that stakeholders provide "the firm with critical resources and in exchange expects its interests to be satisfied" (as cited in Crane & Matten, 2007, p.58). Stakeholders set the expectations and "define norms" for a company's responsible behavior; secondly, "they experience the effects" of this behavior and finally, they assess the extent to what expectations are met (Wood and Jones, 1995; as cited in Branco & Rodriguez, 2007, p. 13).

Overall, stakeholder management aims to create value for all business stakeholders by respecting their interests in management decisions. Generally, three management levels are important for the implementation of stakeholder theory: "The identification of stakeholders, the development of processes identifying and interpreting their needs and interests and the construction of relationships with the entire process structured around the organization's respective objectives" (Mainardes *et al.*, 2010).

3.3 BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to create value for stakeholders, businesses need to be familiar with stakeholder expectations. These expectations are the business responsibilities of companies and are reflected in their CSR activities. Although the European Commission (2001) claims that CSR is voluntary, business responsibilities are defined as the "economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic expectations placed on organizations by society at a given point in time" (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2000; as cited in Crane & Mattes, 2007, p 49). Although this implies a certain power of stakeholders over the business, companies mainly decide on which responsibilities they take onto their agendas.

The different purposes and respective outcomes of CSR are a crucial criterion. Taking the example of fair working conditions, one business may want to provide those in order to motivate its employees and consequently achieve a better economic performance; a second company may have to improve working conditions due to the pressure of legal regulations and a third firm may genuinely want to improve the working environment of its employees.

Carroll's four-part model of CSR (1991) sets the different natures of CSR into relations and developed a pyramid with four interrelated level of business responsibilities that companies can perceive (as cited in Crane and Matten, 2007, p.49)⁷. Although the model seems to be relatively dated, it is one of the most acknowledged and complex illustrations of CSR. In the following, the individual layers of the pyramid are discussed.

Economic responsibilities

These responsibilities are the basic requirement, that any business is expected by various stakeholders to commit to. These include reasonable profit for shareholders, fair conditions for employees or quality products for customers. Economic responsibilities are the “basis for all the subsequent responsibilities” (ibid.).

Legal responsibilities

By means of legal responsibilities, companies are expected to respect legal requirements, such as the laws or regulations when doing business. Similar to economic responsibilities, they are considered “a necessary prerequisite” for the following responsibilities (ibid.).

Ethical responsibilities

Ethical responsibilities address business concerns that are genuinely perceived as right without being imposed by any sort of legal obligations. They are “expected by society”, rather than “required” as the previous responsibilities (ibid.). Different to philanthropic responsibilities, these responsibilities are mainly related to business activities.

Philanthropic responsibilities

This group of responsibilities is concerned with “activities that are within the [business'] discretion to improve the quality of life of employees, local communities, and ultimately society in general” (ibid.). They are placed last, as they are not a required or expected by society, but a desire of the company.

In the context of the previous finding, that CSR is characterized by economic, social and environmental responsibilities, it is noticeable that the two latter dimensions - society and environment - are not evidently considered in Carroll's model. The relation can be established in this way, that social and environmental responsibilities can be legal, ethical, philanthropic or even economic in nature. Looking at an example from the tour operating industry, this relation becomes evident. According to the TBL or sustainability concept, the involvement of communities would be a social responsibility as it adds social value to the companies' business operations. However, it also enhances the customer product quality, which, according to Carroll, is considered an economic responsibility. Overall, the model is valuable as it is not limited like the concept of sustainability and instead the more complex background of CSR.

⁷ Cf. A.2.2 Four-part model of CSR

3.4 MOTIVATIONS FOR CSR

Maignan and Ralston (2002) identify three main types of CSR motivations: firstly, to achieve, mostly financial, business objectives; secondly, “to conform to stakeholder norms and expectations” for legitimacy reasons; and thirdly, to actively engage in CSR based on self-motivated reasons and beliefs (as cited in Branco & Rodriguez, 2007). In the context of strategic CSR, they suggest that particularly the first two types may be deliberately used “as management tool [...] to influence stakeholder’s perceptions of the company”. In other words, these types of motivations most likely have a strategic intent, while the third motivation type has a moral grounding.

With regard to this distinction, Graafland and Ven (2006) propose a typology that defines the strategic and moral dimension of CSR. Strategic motivations are based on the belief of a “win-win relationship” between stakeholder interests and the company’s financial performance (opt. cit., p. 113). Thereby, an enhanced reputation among consumer’s, an “ethical work climate”, meaning more committed and loyal employees, as well as the financial pay off are the most common factors affecting profitability. (opt. cit., p. 114). In contrast, moral motivations focus on “certain business principles”, a company is driven by and which are indicated in their stakeholder responsibilities.

On the whole, it can be said that strategic motivated CSR activities underline a beneficial outcome for the company, either by means of financial advantages, legal compliance or market advantages. In contrast, morally motivated CSR refers to ethical and philanthropic principles, that the business wants to pursue, either by means of business operations or aside from those.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Overall, this chapter provides an insight in the most relevant CSR concepts of this study. CSR is identified as a management tool to recognize, consider and evaluate the interests of stakeholders and to eventually integrate them into business operations. It identifies stakeholder theory or stakeholder management as the foundation of CSR and emphasizes that stakeholder roles are highly complex and important in their influence on business management. While stakeholders have certain expectations of a business, the company in turn decides which of the business responsibilities it is taking on. This is highly dependent on the motivations and purpose of CSR.

Reviewing the previous analysis, the question arises how these concepts can be related to the overall research aim, namely to provide a general picture on how the CSR concept is perceived and implemented among small and medium size tour operators in Thailand. The researcher believes that the identification of relevant stakeholders-business relationships, CSR responsibilities and CSR motivations is crucial in order to develop an understanding of the concept in an industry segment, which has not yet been academically explored yet in this context. Based on the information that the analysis of these three concepts provides, conclusions on the strategic relevance of CSR for the tour operators can be drawn.

4 · CSR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

This chapter firstly illustrates the origins of CSR in the tourism industry, beginning with sustainable tourism development, its definitions and forms and the linkage to the CSR concept. Furthermore, limitations and the meaning of CSR as a strategic management tool are emphasized, including a brief insight into the issue of certification. In the second part, the tour operating sector will be closer examined. This includes implications of the industry structure and a comparison of large and small/medium size enterprises in the context of CSR.

4.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Acknowledging the importance of CSR for the global economy and its various industries, the tourism industry is certainly no exception. CSR in tourism goes back to the concept of sustainable tourism development, which suggests that tourism is operated in a way that diminishes its impacts and makes tourism a mean to sustain destinations and the industry in the long run. One of the determining factors for sustainable development is the tourism industry's importance for the global economy. As the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2002) claims, tourism "is and will continue to be a significant source of growth and prosperity worldwide" (p.3). Although the real growth in direct contributions of tourism to the global GDP and employment will slow down from 2012 to 2020, statistics show that the tourism industry has a stable share in the overall economy (WTTC, 2007). As one of the largest and fastest growing "sources of economic activity in the world", (WTTC, 2002), the tourism industry largely contributes to the GDP, especially in developing countries.

4.1.1 Defining sustainable tourism

In 1996, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) firstly defined social, environmental and economic responsibilities by means of sustainable tourism⁸. According to the *Brundtland Report*, sustainable tourism "leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (as cited in Shah, McHarry, & Gardiner, 2002).

In other words, tourism development should be balanced by means of the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability and should maintain the following principles (UNWTO, n.d.):

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

⁸ Note: In the context of sustainable tourism the research frequently refers to the term responsible tourism, meaning the same concept.

2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

4.1.2 Forms of sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is often linked to several other forms of tourism, of which “the majority [...] can be characterized as being 'green' or 'alternative', in the sense that they are not part of mass or conventional tourism⁹” (Smith and Eadington, 1992; as cited in Butler, 1999, p. 12).

Ecotourism, as the most prominent types of sustainable tourism, emerged in the early 1990's. It principally aims to minimize negative tourism impacts and unites “conservation, communities and sustainable travel” (TIES; 1990). It is often associated with “travel to natural areas” and is a type of nature-based tourism (ibid.). Community-based tourism (CBT) is a commonly discussed form of ecotourism and plays an important role in the context of this study. It is lead by similar principles as those of ecotourism; however efforts are focused on particular communities and their development. Thereby, the communities are actively involved in the creation and management of tourism products.

4.2 THE LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CSR

Although sustainable tourism development and related forms of tourism are widely debated in literature, specific discussions on CSR in tourism appear to be rare. Yet, sustainable tourism reflects the CSR concept in its main characteristics.

Firstly, sustainable tourism operations aim to follow the principles of sustainability, namely to integrate social, environmental and economic responsibilities into tourism business management. The accountability of tourism businesses for their business operations is indispensable for the future of the tourism industry and illustrates an important link between sustainable tourism and CSR.

Secondly, both concepts focus on business-stakeholder relationships. Doods and Joppe (2005) found that sustainable tourism and CSR commonly underline “how stakeholders should be identified and engaged and that initiatives should be measured to determine their impact on others” (p. 9). Furthermore, both concepts are voluntary in nature. All in all, the link between sustainable tourism and CSR can be illustrated by means of the following definition: CSR in tourism are “various measures taken by tourism enterprises aimed at the sustainable development of tourism” (Monshausen & Fuchs, 2010, p.4).

⁹ Conventional tourism is described as a “mass-consumed experience centered on the pleasure principle” (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2004). It is traditionally seen as the main cause of negative tourism impacts (Budeanu, 2005).

4.2.1 Limitations of CSR in the tourism industry

Generally, CSR has become increasingly relevant in the tourism industry and requires the public and private sector to act accordingly. Nevertheless, the tourism industry still lags behind other industries for several reasons (Monshausen & Fuchs, 2010).

Firstly, CSR is not yet seen as an integrated management tool. CSR measures in tourism are criticized for being often “externally focused” and seldom related to the core business (ibid.). Secondly, processes of monitoring, reporting and certifying CSR are still lacking. Furthermore, the lack of external control and monitoring as well as the insufficient communication of CSR is criticized. A limitation, which relates to the areas of CSR, is the emphasis on environmental issues. While the tourism industry strongly focuses “on environmental issues; “social aspects are treated as secondary” (ibid.).

4.2.2 CSR as strategic management tool for tourism businesses

CSR “has reached the mainstream tourism industry”, as increasing numbers of tourism businesses report “on their social and environmental activities for responsible and sustainable tourism” (Monshausen et al., 2010). While sustainable tourism development was previously attributed to the moral belief to do good things and was long the domain of alternative, small-scale businesses, nowadays many tourism companies regard the management tool CSR as a mean to distinguish them from competitors and appeal to new markets. The awareness of business advantages indicates that CSR is increasingly used as a strategic management tool, especially in the context of marketing.

However, marketing benefits should not be seen as the sole purpose of CSR, as otherwise the credibility of businesses is put at risk (ibid.). Instead, effective CSR can only be implemented, if “binding standards” are developed and maintained by the public and private sector. The authors suggest a framework of requirements, which fosters the strategic relevance of CSR in the tourism industry. These requirements address both public and private entities in the tourism industry. Although the efforts of both sectors are mutually dependent in order to make reasonable progress in CSR development, the study is looking at the private tourism sector¹⁰.

REQUIREMENTS	EXPLANATION
1. <i>Focus on human rights, labor standards, environmental protection and fair participation of the local population</i>	Minimum standards of human rights, labor standards and environmental protection need to be met. Tour operators have a special responsibility towards the destination and have to “support local businesses, push for the employment of local workers and facilitate a fair exchange between tourists and people at the destinations”.
2. <i>CSR must go beyond legal regulations and must not replace them</i>	CSR activities by means of “voluntary commitments, codes of conduct and individual projects” should always be aligned to legal regulations, such as in the case of child protection.

¹⁰ Note: The researcher would like to emphasize that some of the requirement for private entities certainly need the support of the public sector though.

3. <i>CSR as a management tool: Not isolated measures but core business</i>	CSR measures should be aligned to the core business and “anchored at all levels within a company and all stages of the supply chain”. Furthermore, they should be placed at the highest management level.
4. <i>Disclosure of CSR activities in sustainability reports</i>	A transparent communication of CSR activities is important in order to enhance the companies’ credibility, to stimulate the market and to prevent the misuse of CSR for merely marketing purposes.
5. <i>Generally accepted reporting standards</i>	Although sustainability reports are a mean to demonstrate CSR activities and efforts to the market, they are also useful to improve the companies’ CSR performance. Therefore, “comparable and meaningful” reporting standards are crucial.
6. <i>Independent monitoring and certification</i>	Certification and monitoring are important measure to assure the credibility that customers are looking for when purchasing sustainable tourism products.

Table 2: CSR requirements for the private tourism sector (Based on Monshauen et al., 2010)

4.3 STANDARDS, REPORTING AND CERTIFICATION

As outlined above, the standardization by means of reporting and certification is one of the main requirements for effective CSR in the tourism industry. Innumerous certifications schemes have evolved during the past. In 2002, the UNWTO already recognized 104 certification and eco-labeling programs, whereby about half of those were located in Europe (Honey, 2003).

One of the commonly assumed benefits is the increased recognition of the market. Nevertheless, there is a difference between business and consumer market. Miller (2001) argues that the consumer “has a large potential in order to shape the future development of the tourism industry”. Additionally, statistics on the EU demand for CBT indicate that “demand is increasing as a result of [...] a growing awareness of sustainability” (CBI, 2009). “CBT elements are increasingly seen as added value [...] and almost 50% of mainstream tourists have an interest in some aspects of CBT” (ibid.). However, the market potential of consumers, who would actually go on a CBT-holiday (2-5%), shows that currently consumer market power is not a valid argument for the implementation of a certification scheme. Generally, it is claimed that certification schemes have the potential to appeal to the business market, if certain “pre-requisites of quality, price, location...” are met, while the concept has not been effective in reaching customer in the source countries though (Font & Carey, 2005). Reasons are the high financial investments to educate consumers and develop “strong brands”, compared to “a low return on investment” (ibid.).

4.3.1 The example of Tour Cert

Tour Cert was identified as one of the most relevant certification schemes with regard to this study, as it addresses tour operating SMEs in Germany and their strategic decision to align CSR and core business by means of certification.

Since 2009 tour operators in Germany have started using it to assess and monitor CSR (forum anders reisen e. V., 2010). Advocates of this scheme believe in two values: firstly, transparency in order to improve the quality of operations and products; and secondly, credibility in order to inform the market or customer (KATE; eed Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst; forum anders reisen e.V.; UNI europa, 2007).

The guideline *CSR reporting in tourism*¹¹, which was published in this context, defines two core requirements for any certification scheme: firstly, regularly published CSR reports and secondly, a CSR management system, including a mission statement, a particular person in charge as well as a plan of improvement (KATE et al., 2007). The reporting framework is based on standards and indicators, which are informed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)¹². They focus on key stakeholders of the tour operating business, namely customers, environment, employees, society and the supply chain as well as the tour operator itself. For each stakeholder numerous indicators determine the areas to be checked and will be individually assessed by means of sustainability checklist. In order to provide a guideline on how CSR-reporting could work for SMEs, the following eight consecutive steps are proposed (ibid.).

STEPS	TASKS
<i>Step 1: Decide and plan</i>	Management will decide on the necessity of CSR-reporting and appoints a person in charge.
<i>Step 2: Workshop Internal communication</i>	Report structures and checklist will be discussed; tasks will be scheduled and divided.
<i>Step 3: Data collection</i>	Data will be collected in the determined areas of CSR
<i>Step 4: Data analysis</i>	Data will be analysed and visualized; results will be integrated into the report.
<i>Step 5: Workshop Strategy development</i>	CSR as part of business vision; evaluation of the collected data; ideas on improvement of CSR, defining priorities
<i>Step 6: Plan of improvement</i>	Deciding on objectives, measures, time frames and persons in charge for the individual tasks
<i>Step 7: Reporting</i>	Compilation, design and publishing of the CSR report
<i>Step 8: Certification</i>	Tour operator will be assessed and evaluated by an external organization; certificate or label will

Table 3: 8 consecutive steps towards CSR-reporting/certification (Based on KATE et al., 2007)

¹¹ Note: The guideline is an outcome of the European project *CSR-Reporting Initiative im Tourismus* with small and medium size outbound tour operators and other relevant tourism stakeholders in Germany (KATE, et al., 2007). Since 2009 certain tour operators use it to assess and monitor CSR (forum anders reisen e. V., 2010)

¹² Note: "The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is a network-based organization that pioneered the world's most widely used sustainability reporting framework. GRI is committed to the Framework's continuous improvement and application worldwide. GRI's core goals include the mainstreaming of disclosure on environmental, social and governance performance" (Global Reporting Initiative, n.d.).

4.4 THE TOUR OPERATING INDUSTRY

Tour operators were chosen as target market of this study and this choice is validated by numerous reasons. As the intermediary between visitor and destination, the tour operator is one of the central players in the tourism system.

The wide range of responsibilities across the supply chain and at the destination provides a challenging ground to explore CSR.

4.4.1 Industry structure

Tour operators are entities in the tourism distribution system “that put together the components of a tour for sale to the public and operate this tour” (Star, 1997; as cited in Mill & Morrison, 2006, p. 219). They either function as suppliers for overseas tour operators/travel agents or directly sell their tours to customers. The industry is comprised of different business types, which have effects on their CSR commitment.

A first distinction is made between outbound- and inbound tour operators. Outbound tour operators “arrange tours for people leaving their home [...] country” (Poynter, 1993; as cited in Mill & Morrison, 2006, p. 219). They are barely able to handle issues in the destination, as the necessary proximity is mostly not given. Inbound operators work directly on site, allowing full insights into the destination and its potential issues. Although greater awareness of problems at the destination level is a theoretical precondition for CSR, it does not necessarily result into effective CSR practice, due to other determinants such as the business size.

The tourism industry is mainly comprised of small businesses and microenterprises (Cooper & Hall, 2008) In Thailand, SMEs represent even more than 80% of all tourism businesses (TEATA, GLF *et al.*, 2010), of which tour operators account for a significant share. While small operators show greater awareness of CSR issues, as they are still run by their passionate owners with an interest in responsible business operations and are closer to the destinations of their tours, they lack the control and financial means to implement their ideas on responsible business operations (Miller, 2001). Furthermore, smaller companies mostly have a greater proximity to the destination and are more aware of problems. In contrast, larger vertically integrated tour operators are “so removed from the destination that they lack awareness of the problems” (*ibid.*).

4.4.2 Comparing different business types in the context of CSR

As this study is concerned with the industry segment of small and medium size inbound tour operator, difference in CSR of large and small/medium size tour operators will be emphasized in the following¹³.

Vertically integrated tour operators

Looking at CSR efforts in the tour operating sector, it becomes evident that especially large transnational companies have CSR approaches that are well defined and aligned to their business agendas.

¹³ Cf. A.1 Website analyses

Analyzing the websites of two of the world's leading travel groups, *Thomas Cook Group plc* and *TUI Travel plc*, it becomes evident that these companies extensively communicate their CSR commitment. Both companies have engaged in numerous measures of formal CSR commitment, such as the disclosure of vision statements, CSR policies, strategic priorities, performance targets and annual sustainability reports. This indicates that the management is well aware of the advantages that transparent communication implies.

Reviewing what Monshausen et al. (2010) found, a transparent communication of CSR activities is important in order to enhance the companies' credibility, to stimulate the market and to prevent the misuse of CSR for merely marketing purposes. However, larger companies are often accused for seizing market advantages rather than truly committing to CSR. Miller (2001) identifies five indicators that influence CSR among tour operators, namely legal reasons, market advantages, negative PR reasons, cost saving reasons and reasons of moral obligation¹⁴. The author suggests that these factors are based on each other, meaning that if the individual factors do not bear a certain pressure for the tour operator to act, then companies only will comply with the minimum standards. Giving an example, the author found that the pressure to conform to legal requirements is the foundation of any CSR activity. If this pressure motivates tour operators to commit to certain CSR principles, the company progresses on the line of factors and next faces the questions, whether CSR commitment could avoid negative PR or even provide a marketing advantage. This process continues until the final factor of "altruism" or philanthropy, which consequently describes the least motivating factor for CSR.

Looking at stakeholders that the tour operators identify as part of their CSR, the environment, communities/destinations/suppliers, employees and customers are considered. Thereby it is noticeable that, as already mentioned earlier, it is especially difficult to implement CSR measures at the destination level – a major difference as opposed to small inbound companies, where the destination is an important stakeholder, if not the most important one. Vertically integrated tour operators mainly support charitable projects that are not necessarily related to the business operations. Furthermore, they use auditing schemes, such as the *Travelife Sustainability Scheme* to audit contracted suppliers, such as hotels or attractions (TUI Travel plc, 2011, Thomas Cook Group plc, 2010).

Small and medium size tour operators

Small and medium size enterprises do not communicate their CSR activities in such an extensive manner as large tour operators. A brief website analysis of the research sample even revealed that only in one of nine cases the terminology of CSR was even mentioned. The majority of companies indeed refers to sustainable tourism operations by means of short statement, product descriptions and the intended benefits for the environment and local communities, however this is all still in its beginnings, often hard to find and not as convincing as it possibly could be. Jenkins (2006) found, that SMEs are mostly reluctant to bureaucracy and external pressure groups. Additionally, formal CSR commitments are mostly not perceived as necessary. As compared to larger firms, the personality and behavior of owner managers plays a key role (Lee-Ross et al., 2009).

¹⁴ Cf. A.2.1 Factors that influence CSR for tour operators

The owner is in main control of decision-making processes and daily business activities, which “allows a degree of autonomy in how CSR is approached” (Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, business owners are rather passionate about following their own beliefs and principles. “The owner manager is often both the driver and the implementer of values” (ibid.). Nevertheless, this type of ownership has some drawbacks.

Firstly, full-time responsibilities might not reserve time for issues beyond the daily business, such as CSR. Secondly, a personal management style is often associated with a degree of inexperience in management and business skills (Cooper & Hall, 2008). Furthermore, small businesses financially struggle to implement CSR, as the need to financially sustain the business has highest priority. However, limited resources and other difficulties should not prevent companies from CSR commitment but rather “need to be overcome through innovation (Jenkins, 2006). The author further states that for any type of small or medium size enterprise to achieve this, it is suggested to firstly look “at their greatest level of impact as a business” in order to “target[] their CSR efforts” there. The following attributes of SMEs benefit CSR development: flexibility, creativity and strong leadership, open communication across the company, flat hierarchies and personal satisfaction and motivation from CSR (ibid.).

In contrast to large overseas operators, local inbound tour operators deal to a large extent with destination stakeholders. Good relationships with destination stakeholders are crucial to “ensure long-term business success”, as operators “depend on ecologically intact destinations and benefit from people’s open and hospitable behavior towards tourists” (Monshausen et al., 2010, p.4). The International Network on Fair Trade identifies five major stakeholder groups in the destination: staff, suppliers, local interest groups, local and regional government and customers (as cited in Kalisch, 2002, p. 33).

4.5 CONCLUSION

All in all, this chapter gives insights into the meaning and role of CSR for the tourism industry. CSR is closely linked to the principles of sustainable tourism and therefore, it seems to be the case that it just slowly starts to become accepted as a concept in its own right. Several obstacles, specific to the nature of the industry, impede CSR development and are assumed to be relevant in this research context. Furthermore, literature reveals that, opposed to the roots of CSR, sustainable tourism development does have a strategic dimension. The requirements by Monshausen et al. (2010) indicate that CSR in tourism should be understood and developed as a management tool and ultimately has to be formalized by means of transparent communication, binding standards and certification.

The discussion about the tour operating industry shows that CSR communication is already an issue in the industry. The example of Tour Cert shows that transparent communication and common standards are also possible to realize among small and medium size tour operators, although theory suggests that certain characteristics of this business type contradict with more formal CSR commitments. Nevertheless, the project was conducted with outbound operators in Germany, leading to the assumption, that this is not fully applicable to inbound operations in Thailand, due to certain circumstances in the industry- and business environment.

Besides, much of the existing CSR knowledge focuses on larger tour operators or outbound operations¹⁵. Consequently, a study, focusing on small and medium size inbound tour operators, is needed in order to clarify some of the above assumption and uncertainties.

¹⁵ Cf. Kalisch, 2001; Miller, 2001; Monshausen et al., 2010

5 · THE GEOGRAPHICAL MARKET OF THAILAND

This chapter reviews the developments and current situation of CSR in Thailand's tourism industry. It analyses how CSR has emerged, caused by the need for more sustainable forms of tourism development and considers the meaning of the concept for the government, sustainable tourism organizations and the private sector. Finally, the chapter is looking at the CSR-MAP project and its meaning in the context of this study.

5.1 THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The challenge “to make [tourism] financially, socially and environmentally sustainable in the long run” is one of the guiding principles for tourism development in a country with a well-established tourism industry, such as Thailand (TICA, n.d.). Foreign tourism development already started in the late 1960's. Many of Thailand's tourism destinations transformed into mass tourism destinations between the 1980's and the 1990's (Cohen, 2004, p. 296).

Negative tourism impacts have become particularly visible along the north-to-south axis (opt.cit., p. 298). This axis from Chiang Mai in the North; over Bangkok in the center; and Phuket in the South characterizes not only the decline of natural attractions in these areas (ibid.), but indicates many of the problems that evolved due to mass tourism development. In Northern Thailand community-based tourism (CBT), involving local hill tribes, accounts for the core tourism product, causing problems such as the economic exploitation or cultural deprivation of local communities. In Bangkok and coastal areas in central and Southern Thailand issues such as crime and prostitution developed along with tourism activity. Additionally, beach resorts are heavily suffering from environmental destructions by means of air and water pollution or the degradation of ecosystems (Longjit, 2010).

Although many of Thailand's popular tourism products negatively impact the destination, the tourism industry is indispensable to the country. Therefore, the need to reduce negative impacts of tourism and simultaneously sustain its positive contributions requires an alternative to conventional tourism (TAT, 2010). Tourism must play a “key role in alleviating poverty and improving income distribution”, which requires tourism planners to encourage tourists to stay longer, spend more money at the local level and consequently generate direct income for the destination, instead of income leakages (TICA, n.d.).

5.2 CSR AS MARKETING STRATEGY

Thailand is an exemplary destination, where sustainability and strategic marketing are closely linked. Its position as one of the most popular travel destinations in South East Asia was a given fact just a couple of years ago. Nevertheless, in recent years its neighboring countries have challenged Thailand's position with increasing arrival numbers and innovative tourism products (Diethelm Travel, 2007).

Besides the increasing competition, political and economic instabilities held their shares in decreasing visitor numbers. Yet, Thailand's tourism has proven to be highly dynamic and is currently recovering. With an increase by 11.5% in visitor arrivals from 2009 to 2010 (TAT, 2010; as cited in Citrinot, 2011), forecasts look bright. Nevertheless, efforts are required to sustain its competitive position, particularly in the regional tourism market.

5.2.1 The role of the government

In 2011, Thailand's government proposed a new strategic direction for tourism development with the recently approved National Tourism Development Plan. The strategy generally aims to raise tourism incomes and enhance the destination's competitiveness during the period 2012-2015 (Foreign Office, Gov. PR Department, 2011). As part of this new strategic direction, marketers have recognized sustainable tourism development as a key approach to face competing destinations. The government is making huge efforts in promoting sustainable development, which is reflected in numerous publications and brochures. According to Thailand's promotional strategy 2011, tourism development focuses on the country's "many traditional strengths as a preferred tourist destination by branching out into new market segments such as green and sustainable tourism" (TAT, 2010). Thereby, changing consumer interests play a key role. A lot of activism can be attributed to the belief that increasing number of tourists are in demand for sustainable tourism products and are willing to pay a premium for those (Diethelm Travel, 2007).

TAT (2010) recently introduced the *Seven Greens* campaign, providing a framework to „balance tourism promotion and a healthy, sustainable environment“ in the areas of tourist education, tourism transport, tourism sites, tourism activities tourism-related service, community-based tourism as well as CSR (ibid.). Thereby, it appears to be the fact that sustainable development or CSR are dominated by environmental concerns. Increasing numbers of sustainable tourism suppliers and the particular concern for environmental issues impart great potential for Thailand to become a forerunner in sustainable development, compared to other developing countries. In 2008, the World Economic Forum (WEF) identified the environmental sustainability of the country's tourism development as a competitive advantage, ranking Thailand 24 out of 130 countries in its Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (WEF, 2008).

Nevertheless, the impression remains that the concept of sustainability is primarily used for marketing purposes. In the context of the growing number of environmentally-conscious travelers, sustainability appears to be a market tool to enhance the image of Thailand's tourism industry and increase tourist arrivals by offering green products. One the one hand marketing indicates that CSR has at least started to become an issue for the government. One the other hand, the question remains if these efforts will be followed up by serious commitment to foster CSR development.

5.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS

As outlined previously, CSR in Thailand's tourism industry is widely understood as the need for more sustainable tourism operations. Although sustainable tourism is largely used as market tool by the government, sustainability concerns had been raised long before its commercial value was recognized.

Thailand has three major tourism organizations that support sustainable tourism across different industry segments: The Greenleaf Foundation (GLF), the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA) and the Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I). They generally aim to promote sustainable tourism development, to maintain individual sustainability standards and to support its members in more sustainable operations. While GLF addresses hotels and guesthouses, TEATA and the CBT-I are concerned with the tour operating sector and will be further introduced in the following.

The Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association

TEATA is a network of inbound tour operators that offer eco- and adventure tourism and has currently 50 members (TEATA, 2007). The organizations aims "to develop and promote eco- and adventure tourism as well as to set up the standard of tourism related activities and services" (ibid.). Members are expected to commit to sustainable tourism standards set up by the organization. These include the minimization of "negative impacts on the natural and cultural environment", "conservation of nature and culture of the travel destination, "local involvement in tourism activities" or the education of tourists (ibid.).

The Community Based Tourism Institute

CBT-I supports tour operators and other tourism stakeholders in the development and management of community-based tourism products "in order to strengthen the capacity of Thai communities to manage tourism sustainably" (CBT-I, 2008). Empowering community members "to participate in tourism", so that they "benefit from tourism development is the philosophy according to which the organization develops as a "tool for community development" (ibid.). One of the main duties of CBT-I, addressing tour operators, is the facilitation of training programs in all areas of community-based tourism development, such as site selection, program design or staff training.

5.4 THE CSR AND MARKET ACCESS PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Although to the researcher's best knowledge academic studies on CSR and the tour operating sector in Thailand are not existent, CSR is an issue that recently gained public attention by means of the CSR and Market Access Partnership Project (CSR-MAP), published in 2010. The project is an outcome of the cooperation between Thailand's tourism industry and the European Union (TAT, n.d.), aiming to "create greater sustainability" and "contribute to the EU-Thai tourism supply chains" (ibid.).

The project aimed to provide the opportunity to enhance voluntary standards of social and environmental sustainability, to better implement them in the tourism businesses' products and policies, as well as to better monitor these standards; in order to "improve market access" and attract new European market segments (TEATA, GLF, CBT-I, & ECEAT, 2010).

The project provides a framework of principles that illustrate the conception of CSR and sustainable tourism in Thailand's tourism industry. It identifies "20 guiding principles to realize sustainable tourism" for small and mediums size tour operators (TEATA et al., 2010), which are closely aligned to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)¹⁶. They encompass the four pillars of sustainable tourism: (1) sustainable management, (2) social/economic, (3) cultural heritage, (4) environment (GSTC Partnership, 2009) and emphasize a fifth dimension of service standards, specific to Thailand's tourism industry¹⁷. Besides, TEATA developed individual performance standards for every supplier group, informed by the above criteria.

GSTC	TEATA STANDARDS
<i>Sustainable and effective service and management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer satisfaction and loyalty systems - Use trained eco tourist guides, provide trainings - Prioritize safety of customers and staff - Control and manage tourist numbers according to carrying capacity of area
<i>Maximum benefits for society and economy of local communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide opportunities for community members to get involved in tourism management in the community, in order to distribute income fairly - Employ local staff where opportunities exist - Have a policy to support Fair Trade - Implement policy on Human, child and woman's rights - Provide services and arrange infrastructure, e.g. water, electricity
<i>Maximum benefits for cultural heritage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow guidelines/rules for conducting tourism in fragile cultural or historical sites - Support the conservation of historic and archeological property, culture, wisdom and local beliefs - Raise awareness among community members to love and protect their cultures
<i>Maximum benefits for the environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures to reduce water use and effective waste water management and treatment - Prepare operations manual on environmental conservation and environmental damage reduction for all stakeholders - Support environmental awareness raising in the community

Table 4: Extract from Sustainable Thai Tour Operator Standards (Based on TEATA, 2010)

¹⁶ Note: The GSTC provide guiding principles for tourism stakeholders to reach a "common understanding of sustainable tourism" (GSTC, 2009).

5.4.1 Specific CSR issues

Tourism development in Thailand raises numerous social and environmental issues, which could and in fact should be addressed by means of CSR. Besides the development of communities and the protection of natural resources, the particular issue of child protection is considered at this point.

Child protection is one of the most critical and at the same time least addressed concerns for Thailand's tourism industry. According to UNICEF Thailand (n.d.), child protection refers to the prevention and response to "violence, exploitation and abuse against children". With the development of Thailand into a popular tourism destination, the issue of child work or prostitution became first apparent (ECPAT Netherlands, 2010). Nowadays, yearly "at least 6,000 children are abused, and most suffer sexual abuse (UNICEF Thailand, n.d.). As government support is widely lacking due to issues of domestic policy and workshops so far were "only available to a selected few companies" (ibid.), ECPAT Netherlands argues that efforts have to reach a broader range of tourism stakeholders. So far, commitment to child protection is largely visible in the hotel sector. Although the CSR-MAP project suggests standards on the compliance with laws and agreements regarding child labor and right (TEATA, 2010), no theoretical evidence in the tour operating sector was found.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Overall, this chapter provides a status analysis of CSR developments in Thailand's tourism industry. Due to the destination's former development as a mass tourism destination, responsible tourism has become increasingly important. The public sector has recognized CSR as important tool for the future development of tourism; however the government seems to use it more as marketing tool in order to enhance the Thailand's image as tourism destination as well as to create market advantages for the destination. While this may provide a starting point for more serious commitment to CSR in the overall industry, serious efforts are so far limited to the private sector.

For tour operators the meaning of CSR remains unclear though. Although CSR has gained increasing attention by means of the CSR-MAP project, the relevance and applicability of the developed standards for tour operators (and tour guides) is debatable. On the one hand, it is noticeable that some of the standards are difficult to measure or assess. On the other hand, the analysis of issues, such as child protection indicate that some of the standards might be set up in accordance with common industry ethics, however are not followed up in any way. In conclusion, a review of the CSR-MAP project and the significance of its standards is an important element, which will be incorporated into the analysis of CSR activities and issues.

6 · RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS

This chapter covers an analysis of the research results, which were revealed throughout this study. Main findings regarding the aspects of CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations are presented and critically discussed with regard to the potential issues and the strategic relevance of CSR.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Overall, this chapter will address the first part of the the research aim, namely to provide an insight into the scope and relevance of CSR, based on the analysis of the tour operators' perception of the CSR concept, the actual responsibilities and activities as well motivations for operating their business in a sustainable manner.

6.2 CONTEXTUAL REMARKS

Although this study focuses on small and medium size inbound tour operators, different business types were part of the research sample. The researcher deliberately considered a well balanced mix of different business types, resulting in the following choice: two social enterprises¹⁸, two local operators which belong to a multinational chain and five independent tour operators of which one is also doing outbound operations. Differences with regard to the study subject were revealed, they will be indicated in the text.

As the tour products comprises the main business of tour operators and therefore are recently referred to in the context of CSR, a further remark is made on their nature. While all operators offer responsible tourism products, more than half of the respondents also offer mainstream products that do not emphasize social or environmental standards. Throughout the analysis, this product type is mentioned as traditional tourism product. The co-existence of traditional tourism products plays a particular role, when it comes to explore the CSR concept, as all companies commonly referred to their community-based or nature-based tourism products in the context of CSR.

¹⁸ Note: "A social enterprise is an organization or venture that achieves its primary social or environmental mission using business methods" (Social Enterprise Alliance, 2011).

6.3 CSR CONCEPTION AND ISSUES

As desk research revealed, CSR is characterized by three main aspects: the business-stakeholder relationship, the three-fold nature of business responsibilities and the alignment of CSR and business operations. In the context of these findings, the following sub-chapter aims to provide insights into the CSR perceptions of Thailand's small and medium size tour operators, addressing the following research question:

RQ 1: How do small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand understand the concept of CSR?

Thereby, the CSR terminology and its limitations, the role of the tourism product as well as the relationships and responsibilities towards the companies' stakeholder will be critically discussed.

6.3.1 CSR terminology

Generally, small and medium size tour operators associate CSR with the terminology of sustainable tourism, responsible tourism or eco-tourism and its related principles. This is certainly no misconception, as theory suggests that "CSR has many similar elements to sustainable tourism in that both focus on how stakeholders should be identified and engaged and that initiatives should be measured to determine their impact on others" (Dodds & Joppe, 2005).

While stakeholder relationships certainly play a central role in the understanding of CSR, the correct follow-up on initiatives by means of measurements or evaluation is not in place yet. Tour operations are commonly perceived as a "force for good" by small and medium size tour operators. The destination as a key stakeholder plays the most important role, as all respondents believe that their business should take the interests of the various destination stakeholders into consideration and create benefits for them.

PERCEPTIONS OF CSR

"CSR is to us what we would call responsible tourism."

Company 3

"CSR is something that we feel that we have to help a lot of people around us. The people who do not have a chance to live like us, to learn like us [...]. Since we have the chance to do this, why don't we do it?"

Company 5

"We do not use CSR very much, but we do use sustainable tourism, because partly it came first in our dictionary. If you think about sustainability in terms of culture, environment and general welfare of the nation, I suppose that sums it up. You cannot do much more than that."

Company 2

"I understand CSR as the way an ordinary type of business becomes more aware of its environment and the communities around it; and it feels that it has to play its part in society."

Company 7

In order to do so, tour operators perceive their main responsibility in developing and selling tourism products that have a positive impact at the destination level. By means of their business operations they aim to actively contribute to society. At the same the tour operators perceive the responsibility to protect and preserve the destination's resources by minimizing impacts of their operations. Both responsibilities are fulfilled to different extents at the economic, social and environmental level.

Similar to what theory suggests, small and medium size tour operators understand CSR as a voluntary approach. As sustainable tourism development was previously attributed to the moral belief to do good things and was long the domain of alternative, small-scale businesses, the respondents of this study do not question certain business responsibilities. Due to two facts, namely the nature of their business, which heavily relies on destination resources, as well as the place of business, being the destination itself, small and medium size tour operators have a completely different relationship than for example large overseas tour operators to the destination. They share a natural concern about the impacts of their business operations.

“If we saw Pattaya 10 years ago, people moved away. The tour operators abroad do not care what happens to your country. When it is damaged, it is damaged and they go somewhere else...! They don't care what happens in Thailand. But we will be here, so we have to protect our own resources and business.”

Company 8

6.3.2 Limitations to CSR terminology

Although all tour operators have a more or less common understanding of the principles of CSR, which was revealed at different points throughout the interviews, a general aversion to the terminology, especially in the context of tourism, became evident. All respondents instantly referred to terms like “sustainable tourism”, “responsible tourism” or “eco-tourism”, instead of using the term CSR.

“My experience is nearly 12 years... At that time no one told me this is CSR, this is CBT, no one told us. One day they said: Ah, you are eco, you are green...”

Nowadays, many companies use the term as logo or slogan, but for us it come from here... [points to the heart]. We started things like this years ago...”

Company 1

Reasons for this are various. Small and medium size tour operators largely neglect the term CSR, as they feel it would not do justice to their business philosophy. All operators commonly agree that CSR is fashionable terminology for principles that they have committed to much longer before CSR has become recently promoted in the tourism industry. The same applies for phrases such as “sustainable tourism”, however the respondents were more comfortable using these terms to describe the nature of their business operations.

The interviews revealed that tour operators fear to lose a certain degree of credibility, when being confused with mainstream tourism companies. This might be due to the fact CSR is often associated with other industries, where it has become very much connected with issues such as image building or “green washing”. Rather than being concerned with “formal theories”, research revealed that small and medium size tour operators perceive a genuine need to positively contribute to their country’s society. An industry expert, involved in the CSR-MAP Project, argues that small tour operators are indeed aware of the areas that CSR concerns, such as the environment, society and management.

“Small tour operators do not really know what CSR actually is in terms of how European people or academic people would define it, but they have heard of CSR. They know that is has something to do with the environment and the society and maybe with good management [...]”

Expert, CSR-MAP Project

Compared to large tour operators, small and medium size tour operators are on a similar way: “You will be able to find a lot of common ground, but if you ask them, how they understood CSR they probably have a completely or fairly different understanding” (Expert, CSR-MAP Project). The understanding differs from that of “European or academic people”, as the previous discussion has shown that “they might know more about other ideas, like eco-tourism or responsible tourism” (ibid.). The tour operators rather follow a “hands-on approach”, led by their beliefs and experience and do not fully understand CSR as a business or management tool. However, while an internal drive and strong belief is certainly a valuable foundation for CSR, it could prevent the tour operators’ efforts from resulting into effective and meaningful outcomes.

As Jenkins (2006) found for SMEs, “CSR needs to be mutually beneficial if it was to succeed in a business context” (p. 253). Therefore, a strategic business view on CSR is required in order to sustain the companies’ responsible business operations in the long term. Nevertheless, stimulation a better understanding of what CSR could actually do is not an easy undertaking, as SMEs are rather reluctant to bureaucracy and do not perceive formal CSR commitments as necessary (ibid). These are aspects, which have to be taken into consideration for recommendation on the future development of CSR.

6.4 CSR ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES

As part of a comprehensive picture of CSR, it is important to map out the tour operators’ areas of activities and identify related issues in order to determine where CSR is currently at. Therefore this sub-chapter aims to investigate the following research question:

RQ 2: To what types of CSR activities do small and medium inbound tour operators in Thailand commit to and what relevance do these activities have for the business?

6.4.1 The role of the tour product

Generally, the interviewees perceive responsible business operations as a counter movement to mass tourism, which shaped Thailand's tourism industry for many years. Small and medium size tour operators have a main responsibility in contributing to a more sustainable tourism industry and do that by offering alternatives to traditional tourism products. Consequently, the tour product has an emphasized role in the discussion around CSR, as much of the CSR commitment is reflected in the development and management of tour products. This also reveals that, different to what theory suggests, CSR is actually quite well integrated into business activity and not "externally focused" and "seldom related to the core business" (Monshausen et al., 2010).

6.4.2 Stakeholder management

Identifying stakeholder relationships

As mentioned earlier the stakeholder view, which is fundamental to CSR, is present among the respondents. Small and medium size tour operators are widely concerned with respecting the interests of their stakeholders, especially destination stakeholders. While none of the respondents explicitly used the term stakeholder throughout the interviews, different relevant groups could be identified. All tour operators are aware of their relationships with local communities, the environment, employees, consumers and overseas tour operators, which are in theory defined as "primary business-stakeholders" (Freeman, 2009). Particularly the relationship with local communities was commonly emphasized by the respondents¹⁹.

Besides, two relevant groups that affect primary business-stakeholder relationships were identified. On the one hand, there are NGOs, with whom many tour operators frequently work together, for example, by integrating NGO projects into their tours. On the other hand, there is the government, which is quite a controversial issue. Governmental efforts to foster CSR are mostly done for strategic marketing reasons and are perceived as those by many of the respondents. As one respondent said, "If they want to promote green tourism they produce a book about it and that is it... and they invite some media to come and see it" (Company 8). Although this is the current reality, governmental support is surely indispensable in order to progress in CSR matters. As Monshausen et al. (2010) claim, "Companies gain credibility if they see their CSR ideas as challenges to the public sector to develop binding standards [...] and this requires the involvement of both industry and government" (p.9).

The co-operation with TEATA or CBT-I, of which the first one is a private- and the second one a public organization, is already an important element to most of the tour operators' responsible business operations. Many of them work together with CBT-I to set up and maintain their community-based tourism products.

Moreover, the example of the CSR-MAP project, where both organizations as well as the European Union were involved, shows that joint efforts of public and private sectors do have benefits. Nevertheless, these joint efforts have not been extensively developed yet.

¹⁹ Cf. 6.4.1 The role of the tourism product

The nature of stakeholder responsibilities

With regard to their stakeholder responsibilities, it can be said that the tour operators have quite an established understanding of their business-stakeholder relationships and the related responsibilities. Responsibilities are perceived towards all primary business stakeholders. Within the framework of Carroll's four-part model of CSR (1991), it was revealed that tour operators primarily perceive economic and ethical responsibilities. Examples, which will be elaborated on at a later point, are fair payments for local tour guides (economic responsibility) or the use of environmentally-friendly tour vehicles (ethical responsibility). Philanthropic responsibilities are more rarely perceived and mostly go back to the individual commitment of business owners in projects besides their daily business. Examples include donations or relief operations in times of natural disasters, like tsunamis or flooding or the personal support of NGOs by means of own projects. Exceptions are foundations which the operators that are part of a multinational chain have set up.

A separate issue is the lack of legal responsibilities. Although it is positive if companies do not commit to CSR simply in order to avoid legal sanctions, legislation regarding particular CSR issues in tourism is lacking behind in Thailand. This applies, for example, to human right issues, of which child protection is one. Except from one company, which provides child safe training for tour leaders and staff, no specific statements were made about the issue. Nevertheless, CSR in tourism should focus on human rights, labor standards and should be aligned to legal regulations (Monshausen et al., 2010). This does not mean that any of the respondents violate legislation; however this sort of issue is obviously not prioritized. Reasons for this can be found in the lacking government support and the limited availability of workshops (ECPAT Netherlands, 2010).

6.4.3 Community development

Supporting communities

As a mentioned earlier, much of the CSR activities are correlated to the companies' tourism product development, which explains why tour operators extensively focus on community development activities. Small and medium size tour operators aim to actively involve communities in their tourism products by means of community-based tourism. As part of their economic responsibility they mean to provide employment opportunities that assure economic benefits in form of additional income. Entire communities or individual members are involved at various levels of the itineraries, for example as host, tour leader or vehicle drivers. Although it is a genuine concern of the tour operators to financially support community by means of employment, they are commonly aware that this involvement does also benefits their business operations. Local tour guides enhance products with authenticity and knowledge, while local drivers assure a higher degree of safety through driving experience in the local environment - skills that in the end benefit the quality of the tourism products

Besides the opportunities to generate additional income by means of CSR, the importance of non-financial benefits is emphasized. Examples include the improvement of local facilities or infrastructure, such as construction support for local schools, the fixing of broken water pumps, the modernization of toilets or the installation of street lights. Similar to the skills of local communities, some of the improvements above are also seen as a benefit or “bonus” to the tour products, as one company for example argues that: “If we change the style of the squad toilets to be flush toilets it is good for them [the community] and one day, when we have visitors to stay with us it also can serve them” (Company 1).

Moreover, research revealed that intangible benefits are also important. The majority of tour companies prioritize the responsibility to prevent the loss of local culture. As part of their tours they offer communities the opportunity to present local customs and traditions, like handicraft, art or cuisine, by means of workshops, performances or markets. On the one hand this enhances the self-respect and pride of local communities; on the other hand it acknowledges and preserves the often vulnerable culture. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier culture is an important component of Thailand’s tourism products. Consequently, communities that are hosting guests overnight or sharing their local traditions are important to deliver this type of cultural learning experience that the companies’ clients are looking for. Thus, the preservation of the communities’ culture and traditions is besides the earlier mentioned skills and knowledge another aspect of CSR that delivers both, benefits for the community as well as for the business.

Overall, the desire to improve life standards of the local communities frequently emerged as the two main objectives of CSR. One company stated that it uses “tourism as a tool to improve and develop local life standards” (Company 1). Another believes “that when the people get a bit more revenue, bit by bit, they can afford a better standard of life [...] by being more self-confident and educated” (Company 4). Nevertheless, as the examples above show, tour operators are well aware of the share value that responsible business operations provide, in theory also described as “exchange relationship” (Hill and Jones, 1992).

Facilitating the relationship with communities

A major responsibility and at the same time an important concern is the process of developing and maintaining the relationship with local communities is doing it in the “right way”. 2-way communication between both sides is essential to make sure that community interests and needs are understood and addressed correctly by tour operators. Furthermore, the education of communities is considered an important business responsibility in order to prevent misunderstandings. The majority of operators emphasize the importance of communities to understand their role in tourism and the benefits that they gain from their involvement in tourism. Overall, small and medium size inbound tour operators are keen to create and maintain a give-and-take relationship between their business and the local community.

6.4.4 Environmental protection

Although the natural environment may be considered as part of the local communities, finding of this research suggest examining it as a separate stakeholder. Small and medium size tour operators emphasize the protection of the environment as part of their responsible business operations and consider relevant measures in their tourism product as well as office environment. Nevertheless these efforts are not as extensive as for community development activities, at least for the majority of tour operators.

Creating low-impact tours

As set out earlier, tour products mainly aim to provide economic and social benefits for the community. Nevertheless, initiatives to minimize the environmental impact of their product as well as to enhance these with activities beneficial to the environment do exist. Tour operators are trying to leave a small footprint, especially during their trips. Arranging more environmentally-friendly transportation, either by using existing local transportation or encouraging customers to choose for bikes instead of motor cycles, they aim to minimize air pollution. One company even mentioned carbon offsetting. Others emphasize the importance of collecting and recycling the rubbish produced throughout the trips. Besides, the majority of companies aim to raise awareness of environmental issues throughout their trips. Thereby, one promotes the use of fabric bags instead of plastic bags on their shopping tours; another one works together with a charity on the issue of deforestation, planting trees with their customers.

Greening office environments

Besides their tour products, small and medium size tour operators commonly mentioned initiatives in their offices to protect the environment as part of their CSR activities. The majority of companies are taking typical measures of environmentally-conscious behavior, such as using energy-saving light bulbs, reducing the use of air-conditioning or recycling paper, while some tour operator make some more extensive efforts. One tour operator mentioned to work with the concept of the *paperless office*²⁰, in order to reduce the use of paper.

While the commitment to a green office environment is mostly perceived as a “small” additional effort to underline the operators’ overall philosophy, various ideas to make tour products more environmentally-friendly can be revealed. Nevertheless, all tour operators realize that consumer interest and corporation is crucial in order to perform and sustain these kinds of activities. While activities that minimize impacts of the existing products can be put in action without the active involvement of consumers, tour operators have a huge problem in selling products that focus on environmentally-friendly activities, as customer demand remains low. Moreover, the criticism that CSR strongly focuses “on environmental issues, while “social aspects are treated as secondary” (Monshausen et al., 2010) can be mostly disproved for this industry segment.

²⁰ Note: The paperless office describes “a work environment in which the use of papers is eliminated or greatly reduced” in order to, for example, “save money, boost productivity, save space [...] or help the environment” (Wikipedia, 2011).

6.4.5 Employee rights

The consideration of responsibilities towards employees is mostly reflected in the fair payment of wages. Exemplary measures are fair salaries for tour guides without taking commissions on for example additional tours or bonus payment for exceptional efforts in developing sustainability. Furthermore, one company mentioned to train and inform young local leaders and champion, while another encouraged gender empowerment within the office. These measures however are an exception.

Microenterprises did not mention any measures regarding employees, most likely due to the fact that they only employ small numbers of employees.

“Speaking part of our corporate responsibility, especially in our area it is inheritably more dangerous, it is just the way we do travel. We go to the mountains a bit more, we might use in a remote community maybe. So we try to make it as safe as possible for our clients. We are trying to get a balance and use a local person who might have a little more knowledge or skills.”

Company 3

6.4.6 Customer satisfaction and education

Looking at the business-customer relationship, different types of activities can be identified. On the one hand, the relationship is characterized by responsibilities aiming to respect and satisfy the interests of the customers. On the other hand the customer is an important part in the companies' responsibility to minimize impacts on the local community and environment. This differentiation will be considered in the following argument.

Small and medium size tour operators perceive direct responsibilities towards their customers in terms of education. “[Our clients come to Thailand] to learn more about it. [...] They have been to the temples, they have seen the beaches, they want to learn something about Thai people [...]” (Company 2). They have a more sophisticated taste and expectations than traditional holiday consumers. Therefore, tour operators have a particular responsibility in offering tour product that appeal to the client in terms of content and quality. The respondents are aware of this responsibility and aim to provide tour products that link consumer and community in a meaningful way and raise awareness of issues. Thereby, the use of qualified local tour guides is essential in order to meet the clients' expectations. The majority of companies employ their own tour guides or provide trainings according to individual standards.

Besides education, customer safety for customers is an important concern, commonly mentioned by the respondents. Although it is “just the responsibility issue that any tour operating company has” (Tour operator 3), the majority of companies agree that the nature of some of their products requires a more careful consideration of potential health and safety issues for clients. This especially applies to tours in remote communities or areas or the use of local vehicles that do not fully meet safety the standards of Western civilizations.

In order to minimize risk, tour operators take different measures, such as the registration of tours with the local tourism police or the use of local persons driving vehicles in rather difficult areas. Additionally, safety regulations imposed by overseas operators or the Thai government can restrict certain activities.

6.4.7 Reviewing the CSR-MAP project

In the context of the identified responsibilities and CSR activities, the researcher considers it useful to provide a brief analysis of the findings with regard to the CSR-MAP project. The project originally intended to foster the link between supply and market side with one of its main outcomes being the establishment of performance standards (TEATA, 2010). Nevertheless, research has shown that these standards do not significantly influence the tour operator's business operations. One company made a general statement that the standards would widely reflect their CSR activities. However, the overall relevance of the criteria remains unclear. Instead, the majority of respondents especially appreciate the project as a platform for networking, the exchange of ideas and mutual support.

Research revealed that the tour operators are at different levels of CSR and this is due to different reasons. Many of the respondents have developed their own ideas, standards and procedures on how to do business more sustainably. Thereby, the business structure does play a key role. While, for example, a local tour operator of a larger multinational company benefits from well established policies and a certain reputation, smaller companies, such as social enterprises do not have the means to implement and follow up on complex CSR activities. However, the expert from the CSR-MAP project claims, that the standards generally reflect, what small and medium size tour operators "are feeling comfortable to commit to". While this might be true in theory, research results indicate that many of the standards are not relevant at the moment. Instead, the notion prevails that the current load and extents of standards is overwhelming for the tour operators and consequently discourage rather than encourage them to commit to these criteria. Examples of standards, which are not considered or not applicable for the majority of companies are: *policy to support Fair Trade; policy in compliance with Thai Laws and International agreement on Human; child and women's rights, define employment structures, staff responsibilities, customer satisfaction and loyalty system.*

The project's supplier manual indicates that "suppliers will not automatically be able to reach standards, even if they agree with them. Training and even funding support will need to be provided, in order to assist suppliers to reach their new standards" (TEATA et al., 2010, p.121). Nevertheless, the researcher argues that, before this step can even be taken, tour operators have to become fully convinced of the relevance and benefits, which a formalization of sustainable business operations bares. As the discussion on CSR perceptions revealed earlier, this is hardly the case, yet. Overall, this discussion reveals that there is a need to better communicate and inform on the importance of standards, so that tour operators are able to work with them. Furthermore, standards need to be more practicable and relevant.

6.5 CSR MOTIVATIONS AND ISSUES

“I am a very much hardcore ‘sustainable being’. When we started to get to know about pollution in the 80’s, I sold my car and bought a bike. [...] I am very concerned about these issues [...] and we are trying to bring this kind of identity to the company.”

Company 4

As pointed out earlier, CSR commitment of small and medium size tour operators largely stems from a genuine belief to not harm the destination and instead create value with their business operations. Nevertheless, the analysis of stakeholder relationships shows that the companies are certainly aware of the business benefits that the management of stakeholder relationships delivers, leading to the assumption that besides moral obligations, strategic concerns play a role. By means of the following sub-chapter the researcher aims to define and analyze these motivations and evolving issues, referring to the following research question:

Which motivations for the CSR commitment of small and medium size inbound tour operators can be identified?

In order to define the motivations and analyze the relevance of certain motivations the work by Graafland and Ven (2006) and Miller (2001), which were outlined earlier in this study, is used as theoretical framework. What research revealed is that, opposed to large overseas tour operators, moral obligations are not at the end of a consecutive row of motivational indicators, but do provide the basis for CSR.

6.5.1 Moral motivations

Moral obligations can be identified as the central motivation for CSR commitment of small and medium size tour operators. As mentioned earlier, all companies strongly believe that their business can contribute to the destination instead of harming it, as mass tourism operations do. Although all respondents understand that they have no power to change the nature of mass tourism in Thailand, they are convinced that they have at least to “make sure that what [they] do is not like that” (Tour operator 2). The business philosophy of small and medium size tour operators strongly reflects their moral beliefs. “Giving back” and “doing good things” were common expressions to underline this philosophy and illustrate philanthropic as well as ethical intentions.

The role of the business owner and employees

Much of the commitment to operate business in a responsible manner can be attributed to the attitude of the business owner or founder. Research revealed that CSR commitment of small and medium size tour operators is strongly driven by passionate leadership. The business is strongly influenced by the owner philosophy that is carried out across all levels of employment. The interviews with employees at different levels showed that moral beliefs are communicated through the whole company. Thereby, the beliefs are strongly shaped by the personal background of the owners and employees. Firstly, education and personal experience is an important factor.

Some owners and employees in management positions come from environmental or social backgrounds; others have worked in Thailand's tourism industry for a long period of time and saw the destructive development of Thailand's tourism industry.

Secondly, the strong affinity to their home country is crucial. Owners and employees are mostly Thai Nationals or have been living in the country for most of their lives, so that they feel the need to protect and preserve Thailand's natural and cultural assets. Based on these facts, many companies look back at a long tradition of responsible business operations, promoting social projects or offering nature-based tours already in the early years of tourism development.

"I started since I was a student, because I worked in a sort of environmental club, trying to improve the environment and nature, and also acting against projects or initiatives that destroyed the nature..."

Company 8

6.5.2 Strategic motivations

As the discussion above shows, moral motivations mostly lead back to the beliefs and philosophies of business owners, strategic motivations need to be considered too. One of the basic motivators that cannot be classified according to Miller's model, but is a general business concern of especially inbound operators, is the fact that they aim to protect the natural and cultural resources that their tours are dependent on. Reviewing the motivational indicators for tour operators, theory suggests legal reasons, market advantages, negative PR reasons and cost saving reasons (Miller, 2001). While legal reasons²¹ or the avoidance of negative PR are not relevant for small and medium size business, as these issues are not typically a concern of small and medium size businesses, the issues of cost saving and market advantages occurred throughout the interview.

The issue of cost saving

CSR is commonly praised to eventually lead to cost saving for the business. Proving a common counter-argument to this assumption, small and medium size tour operators commonly negate this view, as responsible business operations often require additional investments. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason to question the motivation of cost saving. "In Thailand the social and cultural side [...] is part of the strength of the tourism product" (Expert CSR-MAP Project).

²¹ Cf. 6.4.2 Stakeholder management: The nature of business responsibilities

As mentioned earlier, products stand out through their high-quality. In order to live up to these standards, the tour operators are required to, for example, assure the fair payment of local communities and employees as well as the comprehensive training of local people to qualify them for work, which is only possible by means of continuous financial investments. Consequently, these components will always create additional costs that in the end are reflected in the higher-priced products. Furthermore, with the refusal to compromise tour prices or quality, which was expressed by the majority of respondents, the challenge remains “[how] to market [naturally] more expensive products” (ibid.). Furthermore, some companies indicated that it is rather difficult to quantify the financial outcomes of responsible tour operations.

Looking at the issues above, it becomes evident the factor of cost savings is neither a relevant concern nor motivation for small and medium size tour operators in Thailand.

The issue of market advantage

Theory suggests that market advantages from CSR are perceived by means of, for example, enhanced reputation or increasing numbers of customers and can be reached through effective marketing and communication. In the context, that CSR is a booming trend in the tourism industry, it may be a market advantage for large tour operators to communicate CSR in order to benefit from the above advantages; however this is not applicable for SMEs.

Instead of being a market advantage, the communication of CSR is currently perceived as a necessity in order to maintain a credible and competitive position in the market of sustainable tourism products. Therefore, the majority of respondents are increasingly keen to communicate their philosophies and ideas on their websites. Although these efforts certainly underline the willingness and sincerity to make responsible tourism work, the actual outcomes fall below the expected outcomes in terms of demand and revenue. And this is not only due to issues of credibility and transparency, but can be traced back to a conflict between market and supply. Thailand’s small and medium size tour operators are currently facing one of the most crucial obstacles of effective CSR: marketing.

“[CSR] will save you money if you are turning off lights, turning off tabs, maybe improving waste management. But it will definitely not save you money if you pay exploited community members more or a fair price. And it may not save you money if you are paying your own employees more. You may keep your employees longer and have more quality work force, but it might not necessarily be cheaper.”

Expert, CSR-MAP Project

The missing link between market and supply side prevents small and medium size tour operators from creating interest and demand for their high-quality products. In theory, community-based tourism products could provide a competitive advantage in order to differentiate business in Thailand's highly competitive market. The fact that the majority of tour operator relies on traditional tourism products besides their responsible tourism products however shows that responsible business operations are not a commercially viable way of doing business yet.

As already mentioned in the discussion about cost saving, a higher quality, that differentiates the respondents' products results into the fact that are inherently more expensive. However, while higher product prices are a fact that is unlikely to change, if companies want to live up to their standards, another argument for a challenging relationship between market and supply side become evident. As Goodwin (2009) states, "small firms from developing countries suffer from poor targeting, market segmentation and positioning, low consumer product knowledge and consumer risk perception" (as cited in ETN, 2009).

Conflict of interests

Marketing issues occur on two market sides, as Thailand's inbound tour operators deal with two types of market. While some of the tour operators, particularly social enterprises, market their products directly to customers or Free Independent Travelers (FITs)²², the majority largely deals with overseas tour operators²³.

The CSR-MAP project, which aimed to link market and supply side and to arouse the interest of travel agents, provided positive feedback; however it did not result into the desired outcome. This is mainly due to the fact that the business market side commonly values price over quality, meaning that if a similar product is available for a cheaper price, they certainly compromise on quality (Expert, CSR-MAP Project). A similar mentality can be seen in the context of promotion. As responsible tourism products require a certain level of customer information in order to market the product successfully, additional pages in, for example brochures, are needed and require relatively large investments, which overseas tour operators are rarely willing to make. One of the main impediments for an effective cooperation between market and supply side is the attitude towards responsible tourism products. Reality show that strong moral beliefs of smaller companies, like the reluctance to compromise on pricing, are clashing with the financial constraints of overseas agents.

Looking at FITs, it is claimed that travelers are increasingly interested in sustainable tourism products, Tour operators in Thailand do not perceive these effects on their business and especially those companies, which are not contracted by overseas tour operators are challenged to reach out to the few potential FITs. This might be a result of the destination's tourism development.

²² Note: This type of marketing is also referred to as Business-to-Consumer (B2C) marketing.

²³ Note: This type of marketing is also referred to as Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing.

Thailand was long known for being a cheap holiday destination. This image is slowly changing and the operators do mostly not target the mainstream market anyway, however communication of product values and -quality remains difficult. Although the consumer might be looking for local specialized operators, uncertainty is prevailing, due to the fact that small operators are fairly distant to the customer and cannot guarantee the required level of trust.

On the other hand, difficulties can also be traced back to the level of product knowledge. Even though the European demand for CBT-product is driven by consumer power (CBI, 2009), Thailand's tourism market is saturated with sustainable tourism products from infinite numbers of companies, whereby the consumer is not always able to distinguish between quality- and non-quality products and often chooses the cheaper alternative. Therefore, suppliers are aware that education must go deeper than only making people alert of responsible tourism products. They have to be encouraged to understand "the difference between a village visit and well organized CBT-products" (Expert, CSR-MAP Project).

7 · SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides the overall outcome of this research study. While in the areas of CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations main findings are summarized, relevant issues regarding these aspects will be highlighted. Based on the conclusions that an strategic approach by means of CSR reporting is required, recommended actions, which will fulfill necessary prerequisites for this development, are provided. Besides, recommendations on further research issues in this context are given.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to provide an insight into the scope and relevance of CSR for small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand. Based on the theoretical CSR frames of conception, activities and motivations, firstly a summary of main findings is given. These findings provide the basis for any further discussion of research question four (issues) and research question five (strategic relevance) as well as the overall recommendations.

7.2 THE CURRENT CSR SITUATION

The following discussion discloses relevant conclusions, based on the summary of findings on the tour operators' CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations.

Among local tour operators in Thailand, CSR is mainly perceived as a contemporary terminology for principles of sustainable tourism development. CSR is neither seen as an integral part of management nor as a tool, which could support tour operators in maintaining and improving sustainable tourism practices. It can be concluded that perceptions about CSR only scratch the surface of a more comprehensive meaning. This has an effect on how the concept is currently implemented and will be developed in the near future. Notions, that CSR is used by other companies to deliberately seize marketing advantages and to mislead the market, are prevailing among the respondents. And of course, this view is not completely mistaken, as the emphasis on marketing benefits will eventually put the credibility of tourism businesses at risk (Monshausen et al., 2010). However, it is highly important to acknowledge that tour operators cannot any longer focus on the negative connotations that go along with the concept of CSR. Instead, they need to understand the opportunities that CSR, as an integral part of business management, provides.

Some of the prerequisites in order to better integrate CSR into business management are already given. Many of the CSR activities are already part of the core business and not often “externally focused” or seldom related to the core business (Monshausen et al. 2010). Thailand’s small and medium size tour operators target their CSR activities at areas where they believe they can contribute the most to solve issues and these areas mostly correlate with their main business. The majority of CSR activities are fairly integrated into to the tour products, being it environmentally-friendly transport options, the visits of community projects or the fair payment of local guides. The majority of tour operators seldom engage in activities that are purely philanthropic and unrelated to business, such as monetary donations. Moreover, tour operators are certainly aware of the advantages that a good relationship with communities provides for their business. As community-based tour products largely benefit from the skills, knowledge and culture of local communities, a prosperous business-community relationship will certainly enhance the product quality and differentiate products from the average tour product.

Nevertheless, besides the strong product focus, a common direction for the development of CSR was not revealed. Although performance criteria have been set-up, the CSR-MAP project does not have any particular relevance yet, as many tour operators do have their own standards and principles for responsible business operations. Some tour operators are more advanced in their CSR activities than others. Looking at the motivations for CSR commitment, small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand do have a strong moral belief in sustainability, which is difficult to combine with the commercial side of business. CSR efforts do not pay off yet, as the tour operators struggle to sell their tourism products and face a missing link between market and supply side. This can be lead back to the fact that tour operators do not perceive CSR as a strategic management tool.

7.3 SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Based on the above summary of main findings in the areas of CSR-conception, -activities and-motivations, three key issues were identified. This paragraph addresses the fourth research question:

RQ 4: What issues can be recognized in the context of the tour operators’ CSR-conception, -activities and -motivations and how do they affect the future development of CSR?

7.3.1 Limitations in the conception of CSR

Although Thailand’s local tour operators are strong advocates of sustainable tourism and according business practices, the terminology of CSR causes a certain degree of aversion. CSR is often connoted with the intention to misuse sustainability principles for marketing advantages. Therefore, business owners are keen to distinguish from this image, as they are worried about the company’s credibility. Nevertheless, tour operators need to face the issue that genuine activism does not make sustainable business operations viably work in the long-term. Instead, they are required to realize that formal approaches to CSR do have the potential to foster sustainable tourism development and the long-term practicability of their business operations.

7.3.2 Irrelevance of performance standards

Responsibilities and the maintenance of business-stakeholder relationships are essential for small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand. Nevertheless, activities are mainly rooted in individual principles and standards, which lead to the conclusion that a credible performance is unlikely to be communicated. Furthermore, the companies commonly face the issue that outcomes of CSR-activities are hardly measurable. The CSR-MAP criteria have not been relevant for any of the tour operators yet. However, they are highly valuable, as, on the one hand, they provide a solution for the lacking common principles and on the other hand, they are a starting point for future measurements of CSR performance.

7.3.3 Conflict between market and supply side

Thailand's small and medium size tour operators have a huge problem in placing their tour products in the market. Reasons for this were found at various levels: high product prices, the reluctance of overseas operators to purchase products and lacking knowledge about appropriate market targeting and product marketing. Communication is the key problem that impedes a prosperous market-supplier relationship. Due to the fact that tour operators deal with both, the consumer- and business market, considerations about changes in consumer marketing channels are as much debated as possible opportunities to improve cooperation with the business side. While for the business market a certification system seems the most efficient way to promote responsible tourism products, the individual consumer market is demanding more targeted and innovative approaches.

7.4 THE STRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF CSR

As the strategic relevance of CSR is a focus in this study and the researcher repeatedly claims that CSR should be seen as a business tool and consequently requires more strategic thinking, the following paragraph addresses this issue and the fifth research question:

RQ 5: What can be said about the strategic relevance of CSR and what does this mean for the future development of CSR?

Strategy is defined as a company's long-term orientation, "which achieves advantage for the organization [...] to meet the needs of markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations" (Johnson & Scholes, 2006). Small and medium size inbound tour operators in Thailand largely fulfill expectations of their destination stakeholders; however they are not able to establish a profitable and effective link to the market.

The tourism industry is getting increasingly competitive, as growing numbers of companies attempt to benefit from this selling point. This development impedes businesses that have been committed to sustainability long before it was booming as a trend during recent years. The tour operators struggle to gain and maintain credibility and trust among their customers. Therefore, it should be an obvious requirement for tour operators to develop CSR in a more strategic sense, in order to distinguish their high-quality products from those products, currently flooding the market.

Thailand's tourism industry experts and tour operators are commonly concerned about the future development of CSR. While they are aware of the marketing problems being the key issue, this study revealed that two additional aspects, namely the tour operators' aversion towards CSR as well the inconsistency of CSR activities are prevailing. Consequently, the question arises if there is a possible way that is able to address all of these issues?

7.4.1 CSR-reporting as a requirement

Generally, processes of CSR reporting, monitoring and certification are commonly lacking in the tourism industry (Monshausen et al., 2010). Therefore, the implementation of an auditing and certification scheme is considered to be the most appropriate way to address marketing obstacles. Nevertheless, certification is only a recommended option, if marketing efforts will focus on the business market. As theory suggests, "certification has not been so far an effective marketing tool that reaches consumers in the [source countries]", however it has the potential to appeal to the business market, if certain "pre-requisites of quality, price, location..." are met (Font & Carey, 2005).

Nevertheless, the researcher argues that basic conditions for an effective certification scheme are not yet given. The idea to employ CSR certification as means to link supply and market side leaves the industry at a point, where it should realize that essential processes are not in place. One of these processes is the critical and transparent assessment of CSR, based on industry-wide performance standards. Regularly published CSR reports are the essential requirement for the future implementation of a certification scheme (KATE et al., 2007).

The strategic value of CSR reporting implies the enhanced transparency and credibility of sustainable business operations. Transparent communication of CSR highlights the standards and quality of responsible tourism products, which consequently provides business markets with a better understanding of the products' price-quality ratio. However, as an effective management- and marketing tool, CSR reporting does not only benefit the supplier-market-relationship, but can assist businesses in advancing their CSR. It is highly recommended for companies to review and advance their individual CSR performance, as "comparable and meaningful" standards indicate areas of improvement of the individual CSR performance (ibid.).

Overall, the subject of CSR reporting should become the key priority for Thailand's tour operating industry. Therefore, the following recommendations outline a list of necessary actions that are advised to be taken.

While the suggested actions are mainly required to implement effective and efficient processes for CSR reporting²⁴, they are also valuable to tackle the identified key issues.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be understood as an essential guideline to realize more strategic CSR approaches for Thailand's small and medium size inbound tour operators. Addressing consultancy firms, such as *maslcontour*, these firms are advised to encourage and initiate the suggested actions for the industry; while a separate entity at the destination should be assigned to manage their efficient implementation.

7.5.1 Objectives to be reached

OBJECTIVE 1	OBJECTIVE 2	OBJECTIVE 3
To prioritize marketing efforts and target the B2B-channel.	To enhance the relevance and applicability of CSR standards for local tour operators.	To stimulate the awareness of the CSR reporting and its value for local tour operators.

Table 5: Objectives for the future development of CSR (Own composition, 2011)

7.5.2 Recommendation 1

The implementation of an effective CSR reporting system should be prioritized, in order to successfully address the B2B-marketing channel.

Given the fact that small and medium size businesses are limited in their resources, it is highly recommended to target marketing efforts at the business market. B2B-marketing is most valuable for local tour operators, as the majority of them sell products through overseas operators. Furthermore, CSR reporting, which will eventually result into the implementation of a certification scheme, is currently the most appropriate and promising marketing tool for business markets. For local tour operators, profitable effects, due to enhanced credibility and transparency, are to be expected.

7.5.3 Recommendation 2

A critical review and assessment of CSR performance standards is strongly advised, in order to enhance the relevance and applicability for local tour operators.

The reconsideration of standards is recommended, as current standards are very extensive and detailed, however are lacking practical applicability for local tour operators. It is suggested to review and condense the list of standards. A differentiation between legal requirement and voluntary standards is advisable. Certain standards should be stronger enforced, as they have not been considered adequately, such as the issue of child protection.

²⁴ As these recommendations do not advise on the , it is suggested to use the *Guidelines on tourism reporting*, published by KATE et al. (2007) as exemplary guidance (Cf. Table 3, p. 23).

Therefore, a priority ranking of standards should be developed, so that tour operators are able to prioritize issues. Furthermore, it is advised to set-up a different structure of performance standards, as the current one is not a sufficient guideline to work with. It is recommended to classify standards according to the different stakeholder groups, instead of using the quite complex GSTC. Doing so is beneficial in two ways: Standards become more relevant for tour operators, as they are able to better grasp the dimensions of CSR and moreover, a stakeholder structure will provide a better and more effective framework for the later assessment of performance standards.

7.5.4 Recommendation 3

Realistic indicators for the assessment of performance standards are recommended to be developed, in order to provide a promising future course for local tour operators.

As tour operators are advised to critically review and improve their performance, a certain direction needs to be provided. Although the existing standards indicate a “minimum” and “advanced” level of performance, it is highly suggested to specify these levels. By means of tangible and realistic targets, tour operators will have a clear idea about the aims and relevance of their CSR efforts. In this context, an initial self-assessment for tour operators is suggested, in order to determine where tour operators stand with their CSR, since CSR levels vary among the tour operators.

7.5.5 Recommendation 4

Meaningful opportunities for education and communication should be created, in order to make formal CSR approaches more tangible and appealing to local tour operators.

It is indispensable that education and communication will play a key role for the implementation of reporting processes. Therefore, training that highlight the relevance and benefits of CSR reporting should be provided for local tour operators. Additionally, a common platform for the purpose of networking, discussion and mutual support regarding the issue of CSR should be designed. Overall, the suggested measures will stimulate and strengthen a common mind-set in the local tour operating industry.

7.5.6 Recommendation 5

Possibilities for effective cooperation with the government (TAT) should be proposed, in order to encourage financial and promotional support for the suggested initiatives.

Trainings, as recommended above, are investments, whose costs SMEs are barely able to afford. Therefore, the government should provide feasible funding schemes. In doing so, the possibility for local tour operators to attend and benefit from these trainings will be facilitated. Besides, marketing support will become highly relevant with the implementation of a new CSR reporting and certification scheme. Consequently, joint marketing efforts are advised to be initiated, in order to provide local tour operators with the necessary means to communicate their efforts.

7.5.7 Indications for future research

As this study is limited in its scope, due to in time and human resources, two further research recommendations, which will certainly support the applicability and relevance of the present study, are highlighted in the following.

To identify opportunities for cooperation with overseas operators

Based on this study, it has become evident that Thailand's tour operating industry is reliant on a profitable relationship with the business market side. Therefore, it is highly recommended to conduct a qualitative research study on concerns and issues that overseas tour operators have regarding the marketing/positioning of sustainable tourism products. Based on the outcomes of this study, both - market and supply side will be better able to conjointly define and implement ways for effective cooperation and joint marketing efforts.

To critically evaluate potential auditing and certification schemes

This study does not provide the necessary data to evaluate if an already existent international- or a regional certification scheme would be the most appropriate and effective solution for Thailand's tour operating industry. In order to decide on the best alternative, it is strongly suggested to initiate a critical assessment of potential schemes. Particular attention should be paid to the applicability of the *Tour Cert* Scheme, as it targets small and medium size tour operating businesses²⁵. In this context, a reasonable part of the research should focus on options to modify the scheme for inbound tour operators in Thailand.

7.5.8 Future outlook for the tour operating industry

Overall, it can be concluded that sustainable business operations of Thailand's local tour operators will be shaped by more formalized processes of CSR reporting, monitoring and certification. The tourism industry, including both the public and private sector, has already become aware of the importance that CSR will have for the destination's future tourism development. Nonetheless, a strong cooperation between both sides has to be fostered in order to be able to invest in a credible and competitive sustainable tourism brand. If the tourism industry wants to succeed with sustainable tourism products in the long term, the issues of marketing and certification have to be prioritized among all relevant industry stakeholders.

²⁵ Cf. 4.3.1 The example of Tour Cert

REFERENCES

- Ashayagachat, A. (2010, February 16). *Green tourism push progresses glacially*. Retrieved June 16, 2011, from Bangkok Post: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/economics/32984/green-tourism-push-progresses-glacially>
- Asian Oasis. (2011). *About us*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.asian-oasis.com/>
- Ayutthaya Boat & Travel. (2011). *Our CSR*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.ayutthaya-boat.com/aboutus/aboutus.php#aboutuslink3>
- Budeanu, A. (2005). *Impacts and responsibilities for sustainable tourism: a tour operator's perspective*. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 13 (2005) 89–97.
- Butler, R. W. (1999). *Sustainable Tourism: A state-of-the-art-review*. *Tourism Geographies*, 1: 1, 7-25.
- CBI. (2009). *The EU market for community-based tourism*. Retrieved July 13, 2011, from Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries: http://www.cbi.eu/marketinfo/cbi/docs/long_haul_tourism_the_eu_market_for_community_based_tourism
- CBT-I. (2008). *Community-Based Tourism Institute*. Retrieved May 9, 2011, from <http://www.cbt-i.org/main.php?&lang=en>
- Cohen, E. (2004). Thailand in 'Touristic Transition'. In E. Cohen, *Contemporary Tourism: Diversity and Change* (pp. 295-314). Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Commision of the European Communities. (2001). *Green Paper, Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*. Retrieved March 26, 2011, from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0366en01.pdf
- Cooper, C., & Hall, C. M. (2008). *Contemporary Tourism, An International Approach*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2007). *Business ethics, Second edition*. Oxford University Press Inc.: New York.
- Diethelm Travel. (2007). *Diethelm's Travel Thailand Tourism Review*. Retrieved March 1, 2011, from The Post Publishing Public Co., Ltd. 2008: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/tourismreview2007/index.html>
- ECPAT Netherlands. (2010). *Child protection in five tourism destination countries*, . Retrieved March 28, 2011, from ECPAT: <http://www.ecpat.nl/images/13/1347.pdf>
- ETC Travel. (2008). *Company profile*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.etc.co.th/companyprofile.php>
- ETN. (2009). *Marketing sustainable tourism*. Retrieved June 15, 2011, from eTurbo News: <http://www.eturbonews.com/12049/marketing-sustainable-tourism>

- Exotissimo Travel. (n.d.). *Exotissimo Foundation*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.exofoundation.com/>
- Font, X., & Carey, B. (2005). *Marketing sustainable tourism products*. Retrieved June 15, 2011, from United Nations Environment Programme: <http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/WEBx0010xPA-MarketingTourism.pdf>
- forum anders reisen e. V. (2010). *CSR - unser Bewertungssystem und Zertifizierung*. Retrieved June 6, 2011, from forumandersreisen.de: http://forumandersreisen.de/philosophie_csr.php
- Freeman, E. (2009). *Business Round Table Institute for Corporate Ethics, Stakeholder theory [Video file]*. Retrieved February 22, 2011, from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh5lBe1cnQw>
- Global Reporting Initiative . (n.d.). *What is GRI?* Retrieved June 14, 2011, from GRI Portal: <http://www.globalreporting.org/AboutGRI/WhatIsGRI/>
- GSTC. (2009). *About the criteria*. Retrieved March 16, 2011, from Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria: http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=58&Itemid=188
- GSTC Partnership. (2009). *About the criteria*. Retrieved March 16, 2011, from Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria: http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=58&Itemid=188
- Higgins, B. R. (1996). *The Global Structure of the Nature Tourism Industry: Ecotourists, Tour Operators, and Local Businesses*. *Journal of Travel Research* 35: 11.
- Honey, M. (2003). Certification: Why ecotourism needs strong ecolabels. In D. McLaren, *Rethinking Tourism & Ecotravel*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc.
- Intrepid Travel. (2011). *What we're all about*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.intrepidtravel.com/about/>
- Johnsens, & Scholes. (2006). *What is strategy?* Retrieved September 10, 2011, from tutor2you: http://tutor2u.net/business/strategy/what_is_strategy.htm
- Jones, T. M. (2011). *Business Round Table Institute for Corporate Ethics, Challenges for Stakeholder Theory [Video clip]*. Retrieved February 23, 2011, from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MsX06eXeb4&feature=related>
- Jones, T. M. (2011). *Business Round Table Institute for Corporate Ethics, Differences Between Stakeholder and Shareholder Theory of the Firm [Video clip]*. Retrieved 23 February, 2011, from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQIKaOFB0b8&feature=related>
- Kalisch, A. (2002). *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Tourism Industry*. Tourism Concern.

- KATE; eed Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst; forum anders reisen e.V.; UNI europa. (2007). *Leitfaden CSR-Reporting im Tourismus*. Retrieved June 14, 2011, from forumandersreisen.de: http://forumandersreisen.de/content/dokumente/csr-leitfaden_mit_umschlag.pdf
- Kontogeorgopoulos, N. (2004). *Conventional Tourism and Ecotourism in Phuket, Thailand: Conflicting Paradigms or Symbiotic Partners?* Journal of Ecotourism, Vol. 3, No. 2.
- Longjit, C. (2010). *Managing a mature coastal tourism destination: The case of Pattaya, Thailand*. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington.
- Miller, G. (2001). *Corporate Responsibility in the UK Tourism Industry*. London: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Monshausen, A., & Fuchs, H. (2010). CSR in Tourism: Pretence and Reality. *Contours*, Vol. 20, No. 1, March-April, pp. 4-7.
- N.S. Travel & Tours. (n.d.). *Community Based & Sustainable Tourism*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.nstravel.com/packages/Community_based_Tourism/6/en
- PDA Chiang Rai. (2011). *PDA Tour*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.pdacr.org/pda-tour/general-information.html>
- Phu Phiang Travel. (2008). *Responsible Travel*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.phuphiang.com/responsible_travel.asp+
- Royal Silk Holidays. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from <http://www.royalsilkholidays.com/en/>
- Smith, H. (2003). *The Shareholders vs. Stakeholders Debate*. Retrieved February 24, 2011, from Università di Pisa: <http://www.dea.unipi.it/db/UtentiEA/mminoja/stakeholder%20debate.pdf>
- Social Enterprise Alliance. (2011). *What is a social enterprise?* Retrieved June 13, 2011, from Social Enterprise Alliance: <https://www.se-alliance.org/what-is-social-enterprise#WhatIsSE>
- Sterren, J. v. (2008). *Financial markets, microfinance and tourism in developing countries*. Retrieved March 25, 2011, from Microfinance Gateway: <http://www.microfinancegateway.org/gm/document-1.1.6303/Financial%20markets,%20microfinance%20and%20tourism%20in%20developing%20countries.pdf>
- TAT. (n.d.). *Ecotourism pioneers join hands to attract growing market of European 'Responsible Tourists' to Thailand*. Retrieved March 1, 2011, from Latest Updates: http://www.tatnews.org/latest_update/detail.asp?id=4266
- TAT. (2010). *GREET Go Responsible Ecotourism and Enjoy Thailand*. Bangkok: hm publishing Co., Ltd.
- TAT. (2010). *TAT announces tourism promotion strategy for 2011, Amazing Thailand, Always amazes you*. Retrieved March 1, 2011, from News Room, Tourism Authority of Thailand: <http://www.tatnews.org/TTM2010/5040.asp>

- TAT. (2010, September 9). *TAT makes "Balanced Strategy" its primary blueprint for 2011*. Retrieved March 16, 2011, from News Room, Tourism Authority of Thailand: http://www.tatnews.org/latest_update/detail.asp?id=5042
- TAT. (2010). *Thailand, 50 Great Green Escapes*. Bangkok: Tourism Authority of Thailand.
- TEATA. (2010). *Green Route Programs and Sustainable Standards*. Bangkok: TEATA.
- TEATA. (2007). *Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association*. Retrieved May 9, 2011, from <http://www.teata.or.th/>
- TEATA, GLF, CBT-I, & ECEAT. (2010). *Stepping towards sustainability, A manual for sustainable tourism suppliers and supporters, CSR-MAP*. Bangkok: TEATA.
- Tepelus, C. M. (2008). *Social responsibility and innovation on trafficking and child sex tourism: Morphing of practice into sustainable tourism policies?* *Tourism and Hospitality Research* (2008) 8, 98–115.
- ThaiCraft. (2010). *Craft & Culture Tours - Phu Phiang*. Retrieved June 15, 2011, from http://www.thaicraft.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=67
- The Intrepid Traveler. (n.d.). *Define Familiarization Trip*. Retrieved June 9, 2011, from Travel Industry Dictionary: <http://www.travel-industry-dictionary.com/familiarization-trip.html>
- TheCode.org. (n.d.). *Code of Conduct (CC)*. Abgerufen am 6. June 2011 von TheCode.org: http://www.thecode.org/index.php?page=1_1
- Thomas Cook Group plc. (2010). *Sustainability*. Retrieved September 14, 2011, from <http://www.thomascookgroup.com/sustainability>
- TICA. (n.d.). *Thailand's Best Practices and Lesson learned in Development*. Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- TIES. (1990). *What is Ecotourism?* Retrieved March 3, 2011, from The International Ecotourism Society (TIES): http://www.ecotourism.org/site/c.orLQKXPCLmF/b.4835303/k.BEB9/What_is_Ecotourism__The_International_Ecotourism_Society.htm
- TUI Travel plc. (2011). *Sustainable Development*. Retrieved September 14, 2011, from <http://www.tuitravelplc.com/tui/pages/sustainabledevelopment>
- UNICEF Thailand. (n.d.). *What is child protection?* Retrieved June 9, 2011, from UNICEF Thailand: <http://www.unicef.org/thailand/protection.html>
- UNWTO. (1999). *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*. Retrieved March 18, 2011, from UNWTO World Tourism Organization: http://www.unwto.org/ethics/full_text/en/pdf/Codigo_Etico_Ing.pdf
- UNWTO. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development of Tourism, Mission statement*. Retrieved March 21, 2011, from UNWTO World Tourism Organization: <http://www.unwto.org/sdt/mission/en/mission.php?op=1>
- Wikipedia. (2011). *Paperless Office*. Retrieved June 12, 2011, from Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paperless_office

WTTC. (2002). *Corporate Social Leadership in Travel & Tourism*. London: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

WTTC. (2007). *Economic Data Search Tool*. Retrieved June 2011, 26, from World Travel & Tourism Council:

http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/

WTTC. (n.d.). *Economic Research, Thailand*. Retrieved March 2, 2011, from World Travel & Tourism Council:

http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Research/Country_Reports/Thailand/

APPENDIX

A.1 WEBSITE ANALYSES

A.1.1 TUI Travel plc and Thomas Cook Group plc

Criteria	TUI Travel plc	Thomas Cook Group plc
<i>CSR vision</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>CSR strategy/policy</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Strategic priorities</i>	Carbon management, Destinations, Colleagues, Customers	Customers, Employees, Suppliers, Environment, Communities
<i>Sustainability report</i>	Annual report, latest version 2010	Annual report, latest version 2010
<i>Performance data</i>	Individual targets for any of the strategic priorities, internal yearly assessment of performance/progress	Individual targets for any of the strategic priorities, internal yearly assessment of performance/progress, priorities for future development
<i>Certification</i>	Travelife Sustainability System	Travelife Sustainability System
<i>Other aspects</i>	Case studies, Awards, Partnerships	

Table 6: Website analysis of two large transnational tour operators
(Based on TUI Travel plc, 2011; Thomas Cook Group plc, 2010)

A.1.2 Research sample

Royal Silk Holidays

- Statement about responsible tourism operations in order to protect and sustain natural and cultural resources on a long-term basis (Royal Silk Tours, n.d.)

ETC Travel

- Statement about the philosophy to offer “off-the-beaten-track” products that protect natural resources and involve cultural assets of local communities in the long-term, information on small group sizes and the handling of refuse, Special statement on customer safety (ETC Travel, 2008)

N.S Travel & Tours:

- Separate section about community-based travel and sustainable tourism informs about for example products, activities with a strong focus on communities, reducing CO2 emission etc., particular statement that responsible travel is not done for any marketing purposes (N.S. Travel & Tours, n.d.)

Phu Phiang Travel

- Emphasis on Fair Trade principles and the interaction with Fair Trade craft producers, own responsible tourism policy (Phu Phiang Travel, 2008)

Asian Oasis

- Emphasis on the interaction and employment of communities in tour products, no other indication on responsible travel (Asian, Oasis, 2011)

Ayutthaya Boat & Travel

- Separate CSR section, which highlight the importance of local community involvement and environmentally-friendly tours, emphasis on shared value of sustainable tourism for the local communities and the tourists' experiences, list of important business stakeholders (Ayutthaya Boat & Travel, 2011)

PDA Tours

- Strong focus on communities and the benefits from tourism activity, special note on voluntourism, which outlines the issue of 2-way communication between communities and travelers (PDA Chiang Rai, 2011)

Exotissimo Travel

- Separate foundation for monetary donations and other charitable activities that support local communities and the natural environment, suggestions for responsible restaurants, shops, accommodation that can be integrated into travels , annual report and display of achievement planned for the near future (Exotissimo Travel, n.d.)

Intrepid Travel

- Separate foundation for monetary donations to charitable projects, carbon management system for tours and business operations, guidelines for travelers, however not specific for Thailand, Full report on sustainability approach published online (Intrepid Travel, 2011)

A.2 MODELS

A.2.1 Factors that influence CSR for tour operators

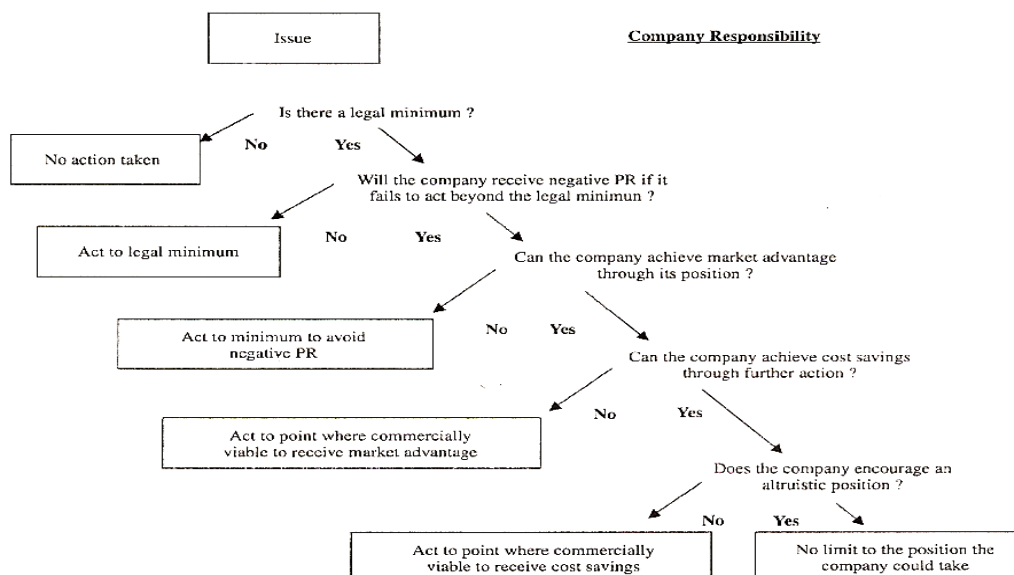


Figure 1: Factors that influence CSR for tour operators (Miller, 2001)

A.2.2 Four-part model of CSR

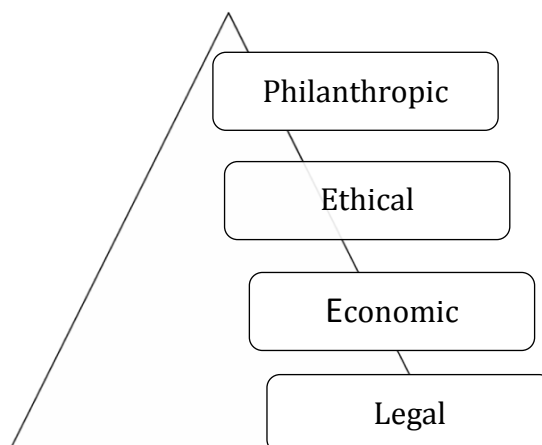


Figure 2: Four-part model of CSR (Based on Carroll, 1991)

A.3 INTERVIEW TOPIC LIST

Section I General information

- Introduction question:

As a company which offers responsible/sustainable travel products, could you tell me more about your business, e.g. ...?

- Topics to discuss:

- ✓ Core business: products (certain focus/strength?), strategy, target market
- ✓ Company size, employee, numbers

Section II CSR conception

- Introduction question:

Could you tell me more about how you understand CSR from your business perspective?

Topics to discuss:

- ✓ How do you understand CSR?
CSR as a philosophy, guideline, management tool?
Need for a different or more tourism-industry-specific terminology?
CSR = sustainable tourism? Related?

Section III CSR activities

- Introduction question:

Could you tell me more about how CSR/ sustainable tourism commitment has started in your company?

- Topics to discuss:

- ✓ The influence of CSR on the business
Change of business strategy, new products/market segments?
- ✓ CSR activities
Overview: What CSR activities do you practice?
Environment, Socio-economic benefits/communities, Cultural heritage, Management/service, Thailand-specific: Child protection (labor, prostitution)
Objectives of the activities, what do you want to achieve?
- ✓ How is it done?
Stakeholder engagement, dialogue? Partnerships?
Which meaning do the activities have to the business?
How are they integrated into the business?
Perceived as an add-on or part of business?

Section IV CSR motivations

- Introduction question:

Could you tell me about the reasons why your company is committed to CSR?

- Topics to discuss:

- ✓ Motivations
 - Moral beliefs (through personal passion, strong leadership?)
 - Business benefit (cost savings, legal reasons, negative PR reasons)
- ✓ Influences
 - External pressures (e.g. government, changing consumer interests, supplier interests, competitors etc.)
- ✓ Benefits
 - Shared value of CSR
 - What benefits? (Marketing advantages, cost savings, competitive advantage)
 - Which CSR activities do you consider as beneficial for your business?
 - Are business benefits secondary or not perceived at all?
- ✓ Future outlook
 - What is planned for future CSR developments/improvements?

A.4 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Legend: (I): Interviewer; (II): Interviewee 1; (III): Interviewee 2; (IV) Interviewee 3; (V): Interviewee 4

A.4.1 Company 1

I: So, can you introduce me to the products and tour you offer?

II: ...and the boat will run from Bangkok to Ayutthaya. It is an overnight boat, so people will sleep on the boat and we have the bicycles on the boat. And the boat will stop several times during the day to visit the local communities. That gives me some picture of the tourists in the other side, rather than mainstream travel. And I never changed for nearly 5 years. So I worked on the boat for 4.5 years, something like that, and then I set up the Ayutthaya Boat & Travel. I like cycling, I like boats, I like people. And I have no children. The philosophy is, why do we have to think about profit? Why do we not think about the benefits? In the beginning we think about sharing and the benefits for the locals... sustainable... And think about the same answer when you come to visit a community, same answer but different tone: Ah, you come again, ah you come again [*different intonations*]. I can go to many villages around Ayutthaya or over countries with a smile. They smile at me and say: Ah you come back! So, how do you feel? You got something much more than money. And I feel like, yeah! So when I first started to run the business, there were only two people of us. And we just kept doing this for years and years and then in 2008 one of our programs won the awards for Excellent Tour Program, have you seen it? Another meaning is the Best Inbound Tour Program. We are quite happy, not just us, but the villages we are visiting. So we told them, hey we won the award. Not the company won the award, but we won the award. Nowadays, we are working together with four communities in Ayutthaya and more than 20 all over the country. We have different brands...

I: And how is the community involved? What are the activities?

II: First of all, we produce community-based tourism together with the villages. We work together, even we start working we never know who it the first customer to visit us, but the local life has to be improved. We use tourism as a tool to do so, not as a tool to get money, but as a tool to develop their lives. How? For example, I think you have been to a remote area in Thailand, right? So the toilet is quite difficult for old generations. I do not say for the Westerners or other tourists. So, if they change the style of the squat toilets to be flush toilets, it is good for them. One day, when we have visitors to stay with us, it also can serve them. But this is just a bonus; the main thing is to use tourism as the tool to improve local lives. So if the kitchen is clean, it is good for the locals, not only good for the tourists. But once, when the tourists come they see, ah great, so that is the bonus.

I: And what other benefits would you say are coming from community-based tourism? So you mentioned facilities...?

II: Yes, facilities. And we are proud and try to bring the positive impacts and low impact to the community by tourism. We have to separate three groups: community, ourselves, and travelers. Before the traveler comes to visit, we give them knowledge. Our leader will tell them what should be done, what should not be done... Dos and Dont's! Things like that. Trying to bring the low or positive impacts to the locals. I mean the standard of living, culture and nature, like not impacting the nature. We use bicycles; we don't have trucks to make more pollution. Our team is on bicycles. And we have the bags for you, for overnight trips. Just two days, stay there and get back. But the whole trip... no pollution. We provide a bicycle drinking bottle, and we start we only fill it up half with water. And many people ask why do you only fill it half and not full? And I say, we can bring the benefit the locals when we are on the next stop and buy water from them. And we use the plastic bottle use too. And a little bit of profit from the water can go straight to local dinner or school uniforms for their children, rather than you stop at 7/11. This is our way of thinking. I will show you later our tour equipment for our bike tours.

I: Oh, okay. That is interesting. So, but since CSR and sustainable tourism have become so popular in recent years, do you use the term CSR or is that just not relevant for you?

II: As I told you before, we started our business... I mean my experience is nearly 12 years... At that time no one told me this is CSR, this is CBT, this is RT... no one told us. But one day they said: Ah, you are eco, you are green... Nowadays many companies use this term as their logo or slogan, but for us it comes from here... [*points to the heart*] We started things like this years and years ago...

I: Okay, but the development of ecotourism as it happened in the tourism industry does put a lot of pressure on companies like yours that have done it for so long... And a lot of companies, like you said use sustainability or CSR in their logos for marketing purposes, so does it make that harder for you to sustain your business?

II: No, not really. Because we run the business for quite long and we plan. Okay, compare two companies: One company uses the slogan 'We are green' and they never go to research by themselves and they never work in the right processes with the local communities. Once they get the customers, what is going to happen...? For us, when you start the progress our program, first of all we tell the local: Please don't expect me to tell you when I can bring the first tourist to you. And please don't ask me how many I can get per year. Because you start better now for your life. That means, we never expect how much money or how many people... Clear? But of course on our website, the new website will be

launched in two weeks I think, our concept or way of thinking will be clarified. Because nowadays it is a communication world, where a lot of people and websites just promote, promote, promote including ourselves. But we have to tell people what we think and what we do. I will show you one website... Now there is the CSR concept on your website too... [showing website]

I: Alright, and you do that because you believe you have to convince people that it is not just talking, but that you mean what you say...

II: Good point! I will show you something else... [showing a draft text for website] What do you think about this article?

I: [reading] Oh, that text is on your website, right?

II: And if people come to us and they are getting to know us, they know that we are serious about this. It is not just writing or talking.

I: Yes, okay. And what kinds of people are doing your tours? How do you reach your customers?

II: Ayutthaya Boat & Travel was established in 2004. The first four years it was very hard for us to get people to know us. We joined Thailand Tourism Travel Mart every year to get people to know us. And later on, when the trend of tourism in the whole world changed to be more responsible, people tried to look at us: Ah, you are local and you run this type of business. Many big names in Bangkok, many representatives, especially the EU market, they have representatives here in Thailand, like *Company x...* They are our customers now because we believe we did something right. And we still keep doing this, and no bargain. People who try to bargain me can run by themselves or go to another operator, who can control their budget. But for us, we think it is a reasonable cause to benefit many parts and get the best quality for our operations. Ayutthaya Boat & Travel is one of the first nine companies of Thai tour operators that was selected by CBT-I. And for CBI Netherlands, we are one of the 14 Thai companies to be supported by the Dutch government to access European markets for four years.

I: Oh okay. I never heard about them. They support you or...?

II: Well, we were selected and there are only 14 companies from Thailand. So, we are quite lucky. They have a marketing training including the electronic marketing and a sort of trade show in European market. So we will be supported for four years, the stand at the trade shows is free.

I: Cool. So back to your business philosophy, I understood that it comes from, I would say moral beliefs...

II: ...moral experience, yeah.

I: But would you also say that CSR/sustainable tourism can have shared benefits for both, the business and the communities, environment, whatever you are supporting.

II: Yes. Ehm, there is just plenty of choices to do the CSR project. But everything should come from here [points at the heart again], not just from the promotion way. Don't try to just think that way. Again, last year there was a big flood in Thailand. And we are a small business, we only have small money. But we asked ourselves, how can we help the local people who suffered by the flood? I asked a friend, because we have so many connections. And he said, hey we don't have the money because money is nothing here, they cannot buy anything. But we need the drugs, we need the medicine. So, how can we get the medicine from many supporters or companies? So, our staff is well-trained, we do cycling and kayaking, so we said, well, we can use the boat and paddle to the local people and hand out the medicine.

I: Oh. So is that what you did?

II: Yes, exactly. This should be regarding to your question. CSR can do many things! I have a dream... When I was a tour leader about 6 years ago, I went to a center for handicapped people, their life is very short. And most of them come from the hill tribes. That day I dreamed and planned, but I don't know when it is going to happen... So, I bring many tourists on our free day in Chiang Mai, I asked people if they have nothing to do to teach them English or buy them ice cream together with them, give them love. And one thing I found out was that they have never seen the sea, they have never been to a beach. And they like to go to the beach. That time, I dreamed about how can I do it? And we try to make it for March next year. I have been there last week to check how many of them are still there. Unfortunately there are only ten people left... But ten is small size and good for us to start this project. I will ask many sponsors, maybe army, maybe navy, because they have vehicles and facilities on the beach. And I will ask tourists too, because I am working in this industry. So I will ask them if they want to be a volunteer for a week and to enjoy with them, but of course they need to be trained. They can train with the nurse up there in Chiang Mai and then get along with the group, go to the beach and bring them back. This is my CSR project for next year.

I: That sounds great, wow.

II: See you are happy now, you don't have to wait until next year. Positive thinking and doing these kinds of things makes you happy right here. It is a good philosophy, he? [smiling]

I: And how many people are working in your company?

II: Very small size... We have our marketing assistant, operations assistant and an administrative team and a helper, boat driver and boat assistant...around 7-10 people.

I: And people from the office are also operating the tours?

II: Yes, most of us have a tour guiding license as well. But we also have the casual tour leader; however everyone on our tour has to be trained with us.

I: So, you are controlling the training...

II: ... yes. And we make sure that they are in the right mind set.

I: Okay. And would you say that you can solve social issues with your CSR-activities, like for example child protection or that sort of thing?

II: Ehm, for the child protection project... we were never really involved in this. We are more concerned about culture and customs of locals. But anyway, when we have the opportunity to talk to children during the day, we try to give them knowledge and our experience, telling them what should be done and what should not be done, I think, yeah, it is educational.

I: Do you believe in the two-way cultural exchange?

II: That is a good point too. Our aim is, when we bring people to the villager... Our guide will not tell you anything but we allow the local people to participate directly with the tourists to share. Our guide will only be a facilitator or translator, that is it. They both will get to know each other with our help.

I: And, are the communities interested?

II: Yes, very much. The first community I worked with is doing this for nearly 11 years now. This is quite a long time and we regularly send them the customers to stay with them. What can you picture about a Thai cooking class? Tell me... It is only me, who can tell... I bring people from Ayutthaya, I mean people who book the tour, I will bring them to the locals, to their garden. Then they pick up the fresh herbs from the garden and go to the kitchen and try... Our guide just translates.

I: But do you believe there could be negative influences of this cultural exchange. Could Western attitudes etc. negatively impact the communities?

II: Can be... we are quite luck with this business. If you position yourself clearly and clarify that you are a community-based tourism provider, people who book this tour... most of them understand. They don't mind the small toilet, the don't care about very thin mattresses for sleep or mosquitos.

I: Okay. And did you also take part in that CSR-MAP project?

II: No.

I: But I thought you are part of TEATA?

II: Yes, we are a TEATA member.

I: But the project did not play any role? I am just wondering about the standards they set and if these play any role for you?

II: Okay, first of all... how many members and how many routes that they can provide for the CSR project. They cannot use the service of all members. TEATA asked me to send a proposal which I sent, but it probably did not suit their plan.

I: Well, thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.2 Company 2

I: So, could you tell me something more about how your company has developed and what role sustainable tourism products play?

II: [...] So back in the days, there were very few charter flights, but there was a special category of fares for young people and registered students to get very good airfares so that they could travel around the world. And one of these first long-distance destinations that came into this network was Thailand. So, the company started to take care of young Western Europeans who were flying into Thailand on these cheap airfares and obviously to travel beyond Thailand to do these once-in-a-lifetime-trip around South East Asia, which are young people still doing today although they do in a slightly different fashion. So, that was really what it was all about, receiving these young independent travelers from Europe and providing them with the service in terms of accommodation, tours, sightseeing, all sorts of transportation... So, and from that we developed into a full-range inbound tour operator. We still get student groups and a lot of young travelers; I mean they are still 18-35 years age range. We also have a bit older people traveling with us, but all of the people are still quite active, still want to do things a little bit off the beaten track, they don't want to do the all the major sights. They are usually people who have been to Thailand two or three times before already. They know, they come to learn more about it. And that is where of course the community-based tourism programs come in, because that is exactly what they are looking for. They have been to the temples; they have seen the beaches, they want to learn something about Thai people. So that is why we have these so called community-based programs. It is a new name for something that has been around for a long time... And I mean, that is true for virtually all of these supposedly new concepts like eco-tourism and sustainable tourism... People who thought about travel and tourism seriously, have always been aware that it has to be sustainable, because you otherwise ending up destroying the product that you are trying to sell. Simple business! People come to a place because it is nice, quiet and unspoiled. That is why they go there. If it develops too rapidly, is neither nice, quiet nor unspoiled and people stop going. The business is as simple as that. You might develop a completely different type of clientele. I suppose that is the case with somewhere like Phuket. The first time I went to Phuket was in 1979 and the beaches there, like Patong, had nothing on there, they were empty. There were miles and miles of empty beach.

I: When did it all start in Phuket?

II: Not long after that actually. In, I suppose around '75... There were already some small hotel developments there, I mean of course, there has to be something. Big empty beaches do actually need some facilities, if it is a sunshade or someone selling cold drinks. They cannot be completely isolated without a single soul to be seen. So, backpackers went there at that time because it was beautiful. I mean, that beauty is long gone, now it is a mainstream international tourist destination... big resort, huge hotels and nightlife and everything. But I mean, it gets a completely different clientele. It has transformed itself into something else. But not everywhere can do that, not everywhere wants to do that. Especially the small islands cannot sustain large numbers of people in terms of waste disposal etc. They can remain quiet and idyllic estates, and they must do because that is the only choice they have. [...] So, sustainable tourism has always been essential without even thinking about it. The National Parks are the same. People go to the National Parks because of the nature and the animals and this beautiful environment... but I mean if you start building golf courses and resorts around the park boundaries, the park gets actually destroyed. So, sustainable tourism is something we have always been aware of. Our former director was very enthusiastic about it. He loved the nature. We started in 1980, specialized in bird watching holidays in the National Parks, which is very special. I was working with tour operator in the UK and US, because that is what they do. They do bird watching holidays. So their clientele comes to Thailand this year and next year they go to South Africa, just to see as many different species of birds as they can. He loved this, he fell in love with the concept spending long periods of time in the National Parks, camping very often because there was no accommodation available. And he was extremely aware that this has to be maintained. And this awareness of something really specialized carried on and extended to everything we do. So certainly, we do care very much about the environment, this is my home, this is where I lived the past 20 years. I don't want to see it destroyed, I don't want the environment destroyed, I don't want to see the minority people's life going away, and their culture has to be preserved. We do want to go and see it but we have to do it in the right way. These people are not zoo animals to go and look at. They are human being who do want to share experiences. For example, we do not say no to somebody who asks us to do it, but we do not feature to the villages with the Long Neck Ladies...

I: I heard about that issue.

II: ... because in some cases they are virtual prisoners. They are like animals in the zoo. We probably would not refuse to take people there, but we do not include it in our itineraries, actively promoting it. But if people come and say, well I want to go to this area, can I do a half day trip, we say okay but we do not encourage it. Ehm, our trekking holidays, which is one of our main products in Chiang Mai, 3-day treks... very, very popular... We are very careful about the impact that they have on the hill tribe villages. They spend two overnights in the villages. We research this very carefully to make sure that the community understands what this is all about. This is not handing out cash to them, so that they put up tourists overnight. The village will get benefit from the overnight visitors, but it is not necessarily cash. They will be paid for out of pocket expenses, like feeding them and so on and so forth, but any other benefit will come to the village in terms of, maybe, support for the local school or if they need some quite elementary very important infrastructure project, like a new [] to be build or a pump is broken and they cannot afford to repair it, we maybe provide them with a new pump.

I: So, there is a dialogue between you and the villagers?

II: Yes. I mean, we might see a village that seems perfect. It is in the right place, it follows the route perfectly well, but then we talk to the community leaders and find out that they not really understand the concept and think, alright we are going to get rich here, then we will not do it and find another village.

I: Are you cooperating directly or is this through another entity?

II: We have a tour office in Chiang Mai anyway. So, there are local people up there who can [] around, but this is something we have done for more than 30 years, so we know people, we know people from the different ethnic minority communities. So they can speak sort of on our behalf with the community elders, because they have worked or still do work as local guides for our trekking tours. So, they are familiar with the product, they are familiar with the client and they are familiar with the concept. And very important, they belong to that part of the world, they are all indigenous people. So, we rely very much on their judgment. And they are passionate about it too. It is their world; I mean they chose to do it. They have university education, so they could be working in a city, earning lots of money. But they prefer to stay in their own part of the country, and they believe that tourism done properly it will benefit the communities. And it does! I mean it is hard to quantify and it is hard to show you any of the hard facts and figures, but quite a lot of these communities, where young people have left to work at a building site in Bangkok or girls who are doing domestic service or whatever... there are, maybe not as many as would be good, but some of them have been returning to their villages, because the village is more prosperous. It is a concept that has some involvement in tourism. They

make the local handicrafts; they sell more of their local handicrafts to the people who pass through the village. I mean we are not talking about some of those so-called 'ethnic-minority-villages', which are just bazars, all it is, is house after house after house. That is all they do, that is their whole life, they do not do farming anymore, they are just waiting to sell their stuff. And I mean, a lot of it is not very good quality, cheap... junk. And most tourist will just take this and go, wow this is local handicraft... And the children go, take my picture, 1 dollar, 1 dollar, 1 dollar... stuff like that. I mean nothing like that in the villages where we are going to. I mean, as far away as they are, it is sort of practical to be away from the mainstream [smiling]. I mean they cannot be totally inaccessible because you get problems in taking tourists up there. In case of emergency you have to get people out quite quickly. Talking about half-day elephant riding, somewhere, there has to be also an area which is suitable for the elephants. I mean, they work maybe 4.5 days, that is it, just taking up clients. For them it is fairly easy walking up the hills, but the environment must be right for them. It cannot be too remote, as they cannot be taken too far away, because it becomes a difficult proposition to take care of them... the jungle does not always have enough food, the amount that they eat, unfortunately what is available naturally has to be supplemented. Practical considerations about health, how remote is the area you got to? There is a balance between getting away from the areas which are very commercial to the areas that are unspoiled, but so remote that it is difficult to operate.

I: Because of safety issues?

II: Yes, I mean there are. Some of these areas might seem incredibly remote, but they are actually not more than 5 kilometer from the main road, which you do need in the event of a serious accident. The Thai Ministry of Health has an excellent network of local clinics around the country. So up in the hill you find local clinics or hospital which can provide initial care... We are well aware of the requirements of European tour operators, they do not want to leave anything to chance [smiling]. So, there are points sometimes where it is actually ridiculous. I think they stifle about what people would like to do with a sense of adventure... I provided a quotation just this week for a company in the UK. So, they want to visit some of the smaller island in the South, now the only mode of transport would be the pick-ups with the two rows of seats... So it is not just sitting in the back of a pick-up, because they have proper seats. But, they don't meet the UK health and safety requirements, because they do not face forward nor are there any seat belts... I mean these are people with an adventurous sense. If they are not adventurous they can do it on their own and go to a company who provides this sort of 'safe adventure'... And then you have these government regulations that make it impossible to go somewhere, if a company really sticks to the law and regulations. So, we are very conscious about aid and safety, about our staff, about the Thai people... But, I mean, we are quite small, everything what we do with a fewer than 10000 people a year. But a lot of these people do not go on thing like that, many of them are mainstream, they want to do sightseeing, that sort of stuff.

I: So, you basically have sustainable tourism products, but you also...

II: We got four categories. Classic sightseeing... temples, world heritage sites in Ayutthaya, Sukothai, Chiang Mai..., then adventure activities... obviously trekking, kayaking, biking..., then special interest arrangements like educational holidays or whatever other special interest people may have. From time to time, may one in a year or every two years, groups of European farmers come to see agriculture in a completely different environment? So, for example pick farmers from Belgium. They come to Thailand to see how Thai pick farmer do it and what they are doing differently. Or vegetable and fruit farmers, they see something completely different, see how pineapples are grown, harvested and packed..., something completely different from whatever it is that they grow on their own farms. Just to see a different way of life, a different way of agricultural life. So the next category is community-based programs, like homestays, bringing people into contact with local Thai people getting to know their every-day-lives, whether it is an agricultural community or a fishing village... most of these villages, apart from their agricultural pursuits probably also have some local handicrafts, whether it is fabrics, or baskets, or making knives, or drums or something... so they will see that side of life as well. And that is another thing, like when you choose a village for that kind of arrangements it is similar to choosing a village for overnight guests or trekking. We have to make sure that the whole community understands and is behind the project. It is no good having 3-4 families taking overnights guests, if that is the only involvement of the community. The whole community must behind this because people want to be able to walk around the village and talk to people, being welcomed, see what everybody is doing, talk to the children, go to the school, just being part of that community during the short time they are there, so everybody of the community must be behind this! So again, we have to be very careful about the villages and communities that we can use for that, because again, it is not just a matter of handing out cash for them to take care of visitors. It benefits them in other ways, not necessarily cash in hand. There are just the general benefits, particularly for children. They just love it! They just love having Western people come. Most of them are learning English in the local schools, so they are talking particularly well, I have to say. So, the opportunities to practice after they overcome their initial shyness, practicing with Europeans... they adore it, they love it! So, I mean, that is a great benefit too! Also, it should be a benefit to our visitors.

I: And what do you think about the cultural exchange the other way around, like villagers learning from your clients?

II: That of course is more difficult...

I: Do you think there is a bad influence in Thai people seeing Western people with for example mobile phones etc.?

II: Ooh, they see it on the television every night! I mean we are very concerned, but there is nothing you can do about the materialism of the West, you cannot hide it. We do stress the people that they should not flash it around, carrying fancy cameras, wearing flashy jewelry. But obviously, people will have cameras; they will have mobile phones... But, I mean you will be surprised that some of the villages will have mobile phones as well. We even had people complaining, that a house in one of our villages had a satellite receiver. So clients go, how can you call that an authentic village? They even have electricity! I mean, what do they want from these people?! Do they want them to live in caves like Stone Age people!? They like to have electricity, they like to watch television and they complain about the fact that some of the villagers have it?! [smiling] No, but we also stress about what to wear. What is okay in Bangkok is not okay anywhere else except from cities. Wearing shorts or really tiny tops is just not okay in the countryside. We just had a look at a project, which is supposedly a community-based project. And the people that were staying in this village... I saw a young girl on the back of a motorcycle, wearing short, a bikini top and a cigarette in her mouth... So, what would the villagers think of that?! I mean most of the villagers rarely smoke, and dressed like that in the public during the day is impossible. So, just that told us enough about this project. If that is the way they run it, it was not worth to be checked out any further... So, we are very conscious about standards. We don't do much of the typical beach holidays, but we stress that people should not bath topless, as it not acceptable anywhere in Thailand. I mean Thai people would not say anything, just because they are too polite, but we should not put them in those sorts of situations where they feel uneasy about something. So, all kinds of considerations... I think, it is quite useful to be Western, because I know the kind of mistakes that I made 20 years ago, these kind of mistakes that most first-time-visitors make. Most of them are totally excusable, but some of them are just not excusable. I could see it from both sides, the Thai side and the European side. So I can make sure the guidelines that apply to visitors and can see it from both directions...

I: Okay. So you said you have been doing this for so long. So, sustainable tourism and CSR have become really fashionable during recent years, has that also changed your business or way of doing business to some extent?

II: I mean, I think what we have had to do is to stress our commitment more, whereas in the past we did not make a big deal out of it. That is the way we did it, that is the way we have always done it and that is the way we continue to do it. But, sad to say, it was not a particularly strong selling point, people never thought about it, right? [smiling]

I: And now it is considered a selling point?

II: Now it is considered very seriously. So, it is not that we particularly changed what we do, but we do make a point in making sure that people know what we do. That is the real change I think.

I: Okay. And is the term CSR used within the company?

II: I have aversions to these 'fat expressions' [laughing], like personally. I have been in this business for 40 years and I know they come and go. I will use it occasionally, but I would rather explain it in more detail, depending on the context. I mean it is not something that we would normally use in a text or e-mail, I don't think, unless it was really important and it was not the appropriate place to explain more fully what we are talking about. Generally speaking, I would not use it because it is more like a terminology. I think there is a lot of hypocrisy attached to a lot of these so-called socially responsible corporations. I mean they might see that it is good for business without being really committed to it. And it is true. Some of them are genuinely committed to it, because the people in charge are passionate about it and their company follows the same direction. Other are just run by accountants who look at the profit at the end of the year and if they see that 'being green' is profitable they will be green. And if next year 'being blue' is profitable, they will be blue, it is as simple as that. [smiling] But I am not saying that every company is like that and I am not saying that every company claims to be socially responsible, it is just cynical... but I think some of them are, clearly.

I: And if you had to define CSR in tourism, would you put it at the same level as sustainable tourism?

II: How do you mean exactly...?

I: Well, I mean, is CSR interchangeable with sustainable tourism... the meaning behind it? That is what I was always wondering when I did my research, because I don't see many companies using the term CSR.

II: In our industry, no. I think in other industries, yes... I think there is a distinction here. We do not use it very much, but I think we do use sustainable tourism, because partly I think it came first in our dictionary, and also it really sums it up... Well, I suppose being socially responsible is slightly broader than just sustainable tourism. I mean if you think about sustainability in terms of culture and environment and general welfare of the nation, I suppose... [thinking]... that sums it up anyway. I mean you cannot do much more than that. They are very close to each other, but they are not identical. But they are close enough so that you do not need to worry about it too much. And they are quite right in our industry in terms of sustainable tourism and responsible tourism, which is another term that we use quite a lot. And of course community-based tourism is one of the areas in which one can be sustainable and responsible [smiling]. And that is what I mean about these terms, they come and go, we are here to the principles of them but we don't worry too much about the actual labels.

I: Okay. So, from what I understood, CSR is a philosophy within your company...

II: Yes, I mean I said it before. Our managing director, who passed away a couple of years ago... his son who has taken over the company [...], he has inherited his father's belief in this and I mean nothing has changed since then. And I suppose his genuine personal belief in it is also to that, he is a young man with lots of big ideas and lots of plans to expand. You can also see that in the long-term, his plans to expand the company are not in any way in conflict with sustainability and responsibilities or vice versa. It makes life more difficult and challenging to create the right product, but in the end of the day it is the only way to go. I have worked in this business for nearly 40 years. I have always been into travel and believe that travel should be a force for good. I love traveling, that is why I stayed in the industry all my life. I love it! And I still believe it is something good. But I also see that can be really harmful, especially in this country. There is very little chance that we can do anything about that, but at least we can make sure that what we do is not like that. And there is quite a lot of people who feel the same way, I mean some large companies too. There are excellent large companies and there are small companies, it has nothing to do with size...

I: Okay. But do you also believe that there are shared benefits in doing sustainable tourism, for the communities on the one hand and for the business on the other, for example marketing advantages?

II: [thinking] I mean, of course we talk about it more now because it gives us an advantage in the market, yes. We are not doing it in order to have this advantage, but doing it anyway, we tell people and that gives us this advantage. Because, as you say, more and more people promote it and say that they believe in this and whether they do or don't is irrelevant. They say it. We do believe in it, so we have to make people know that. If we don't say it, people think we don't care [laughing].

I: And how do you deal with the situation that just a lot of businesses use sustainable tourism as being green and don't do it, because there is a lot of competition coming up?

II: Well, I mean the nature of our business is, we are a wholesaler. We don't deal directly with the public; we have very very few bookings coming directly from the public. We deal with overseas tour operators so we are not talking to hundreds and hundreds of people every year. Our customers are numbered in maybe 40-50 tour operators. People we know well for many years, so they know and we developed together. I mean, we have clients now with which the company already working in the 1970's. So they know, we don't have to tell them, and because we have worked together for such a long time, because they are looking for the things that we have to offer. Now, if we are at a trade fair like ITB, where we are trying to get new clients, new operators, we obviously have an initial meeting, maybe half an hour, where we have to tell them, who we are, what we do, things like that... So, in that fairly short time we are trying to get across our message as good as we can, face to face. And we follow up when we get back home, giving them additional information that they have asked for. And the literature that we hand out is a brief company profile, so that they know what we are all about and what we believe in.

I: And is that getting more and more difficult?

II: I mean, doing business it getting more and more difficult in any way [laughing]. In the area of CSR, it is the same with responsible tourism... I mean, yes, everybody is talking about it, everybody is pitching it, yes business is getting more and more difficult with more and more competition. Lots of smaller companies have been swallowed up by larger companies particularly in Europe. In some countries you got half a dozen companies controlling 90% of the tourism industry, wholesale and retail... which is not very healthy. But in some ways that creates a niche for small and medium size tour operators to sort of work without having to worry about those people. We are in a slightly separate world. As long as they don't start doing what we do, we are quite happy with whatever they want. Things like the trade fair, ITB or WTM in London, it used to be much easier to find new customers at those trade fairs, going back to the 1990's. It was easier that it is now. It is tough, it is very tough.

I: Okay. And regarding your membership with TEATA, did you take part in the CSR-MAP project?

II: We had some involvement, but not me personally...

I: Okay. So the project set up these standards or guidelines for tour operators, are these guidelines you already follow or that influence your way of doing business?

II: I would say they are pretty much things that we have always done, that is right. There is nothing in those guidelines that we have never thought about or never tried to do. You know, they are pretty standard. I mean, it is good that they are out for people who have not thought about it [...]. You know the scheme Travelife? This all has to do with sustainable, responsible tourism. A lot of European tour operators are subscribing to this, and it sets out standards of behavior for tour operators, hotels, obviously international tour operators, local tour operators, other kinds of tourist attractions... how they should operate the standards, how they should deal with terms like health and safety standards, responsibilities, sustainability... So, people or companies can be accredited and it seems to be picked up by the mainstream tour companies in Europe.

I: So are you working with them?

II: We never actually have registered. I think we should do. I think we could get the accreditation easily, we should do it, because I think it will become increasingly important, say in the case of Thailand or any other country or local tour operators to be shown to be responsible, because some tour operators may not work with local tour operators who does not have that. So, that is the direction we could be heading.

And that is good; I don't have any problem with that because we meet the requirements. And if it forces other people to rethink how they are doing things and could do things in a better way, I mean, that is great! All to the good!

I: Okay. [smiling] Well, I have a final question regarding the meaning of CSR. Do you think you can also solve social problems with sustainable tourism, like problems in the communities or child labor? Do you think your product or policies can contribute to that?

II: To be honest with you, I don't think we can improve situations like that. Well, certainly we don't do anything to make these situations worse, but I am not sure if there is a lot that we can do to help. I am no 100% sure that it is even our job to help, because we don't have any expertise other than being hopefully reasonable decent human beings. I think these things are better left to NGOs, who specialize in that kind of work, because they understand these problems better. I mean, we don't spend long periods of time with the communities. As I said, it is important for us to find the right community that understand what we want, but cannot get deep under the skin and understand the problems that they might have in their society or in their ethnic group. So, I don't think so.

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.3 Company 3

I: So, you also sell your tours directly here in Bangkok?

II: We do a little bit of selling here, but not very much. Most of it is done through other companies in the West. We do have a retail shop on Kao San Road, so we sell a little bit but not much. The issue that we are actually having with selling is because we do some CSR stuff, is that our prices are going high, so we are not very successful with selling to tell you the truth...

I: Is that because the tourists here would not buy the tours?

II: Well, generally we pay our leaders more, a fair salary, we do not take shopping commissions. Usually the tour leaders get paid 300 BHT maybe, so they go on a tour and they have to take commissions, so they get a reasonable living salary and we do not do that. We actually pay at least 1500 BHT and they do not have to go on shopping trips, but doing their job, delivering experiences.

I: Okay. Referring to CSR, the term is not really used in the tourism industry, is it? I am wondering how you would define the term.

II: We call it responsible tourism, so CSR is to us what we would call responsible tourism.

I: Okay. When looking at the website you got all those tips for travelers and responsible tourists. I would like to know on which stakeholders or interest groups you focus with your CSR or responsible travel policy?

II: It goes right across the philosophy of Intrepid itself, so it is pretty engraving all aspects, for example purchasing, so when we buy paper in the office to right through how we run our trips, how we pick our operators, all that sort of things. It goes through the whole chain. And it is a big powerful tool and certainly has commercial thoughts as well, you know. But sometimes the balance between commercial and CSR has to be found.

I: So you basically see CSR in a big company like yours as a philosophy but also as a management tool, or how do you think about that?

II: It certainly is! So we can only have responsible tourism if we look for example for smaller properties rather than chain hotels, that type of stuff. And then sometimes you are faced with competition and then you will have to take the international chain as you otherwise could not sell the product to people.

I: Okay. And in your company, has CSR started off with the sustainable tourism movements let's say 20 year ago, or was there a business before and then business practices were adjusted to sustainable tourism standards?

II: No, I think the business itself started as part of the founders' philosophy, but just organically, as some of the first Western tourist leaders who were coming here, they were very interested in making sure that communities were looked after, that money spent in the country goes into local areas... So, I think it just organically grew and today it is going on a lot more professional, as you have CSR people working within the organization.

I: Okay, so there is a separate department?

II: Yes.

I: So you are doing community-based tourism and what else, like what type of CSR issues are you focusing on, especially here in Thailand?

II: Here we probably focus a lot more on carbon offsetting, that's what we do, we carbon offset our trips. Our office is also carbon offset. We are also training our tour leaders. I suppose, as a tour operating company we try to have many aspects, like Intrepid donation for example. We have projects within our region, so we try to support projects on routes that our groups would travel to. So, we are trying to educate the clients, which also hopefully leads to money that may be donated or may not, but it is still an education process. We take them to projects like NGO x who are doing prosthetic arms and legs. We take them, show them and educate them what the issues are. Also, Restaurant x which is an NGO and takes street kids to train them to run restaurants that would be part of our itinerary. We go and visit that restaurant or put a lunch at that restaurant and talk about issues involved like street kids and begging, not giving things out to kids...

I: So, basically child protection is a big issue?

II: Yes, every tour leader and other staff who work with NGO x do what we call Child Safe Training. So that's all about begging, child prostitution... We also work with hotels, so we teach the reception staff what to look out for, what to report and things like that.

I: And would you that CSR is already quite far in Thailand, or is it just in the beginning...?

II: In Thailand it is quite developed... Cambodia, Laos... so so...

I: The reason I am asking, from what I have researched, CSR in Thailand has a really strong focus on the environment? For example, the government associates CSR strongly with the environment and the term is always linked to "green tourism". How do you perceive that?

II: I find it from the government perspective, like TAT; it is very much focused on green, but do not really consider the deeper issues...

I: Yes, based on my research and from what I read, it appears to be more a marketing tool or strategic tool aiming at the environment-conscious travelers.

II: Yes, I agree. And then it is actually played out in what they do. So, we actually try to avoid bribery .

Many other tour companies just pay the park guard a certain amount of dollars and try to get as many people in as possible.

I: So, would you say that the government still has some influence on the business of Company 3?

II: No, not really, not in our company. I just think that corruption [...]

I: So, the government basically uses the concept of CSR as PR tool?

II: Yes, especially from TAT.

I: The CSR activities you are doing, do you have certain objectives that you are aiming at with these activities?

II: I think our job is being different. We realize we are a tour company, we are not an NGO. So we try to introduce people, so we do not really have an end objective. So the objective would be, if someone is interested to put him in touch with the right people. 15 years ago we tried to set up home stays as a tour company ourselves and, to be quite frank, they failed, just because we did not have the experience, the time or the knowledge and really find out what they wanted, find out what we wanted, make sure that the money went to the right places and that the

whole village was involved, some part of that CBT experience. So we would go in, we would set up a home stay, to find out later that it is only one family is becoming wealthy from it. It causes friction within the community. So we actually found out that we would do it through CBT-I here in Thailand. Because they are actually experts or NGOs that know those communities, do all the background work, and then we can come in.

I: So the term CSR has been around for a while, and in other industries particularly strategic CSR is becoming more and more of an issue. So CSR is not only done for moral reasons but also for business reasons. Would you say that is true for the tourism industry?

II: Yes. There is certainly a marketing side of that. There is a genuine concern about that. Looking at the carbon offsetting, I spent many man hours of tracking down, what fuel we use, how much the flights are that everyone takes. It is because you market yourself. Why should you not say, well we are doing this good stuff

I: So would you say that gives you a competitive advantage?

II: Yes, it does.

I: Also, as a well-known company, so you have a big market share in ecotourism or responsible tourism, compared to smaller companies?

II: Yes, we certainly do. So the clients do a survey after the trip and it always comes up as one of the main reasons of why they travel with us, because of our responsible tourism philosophies.

I: So, are there also other benefits that you perceive from the marketing, increasing numbers of customers or anything?

II: I suppose, you cannot really quantify that. You get some that traveled with us and later being volunteers in Cambodia. So there is this process of linking communities with tourists. And there is much more that we might not hear about. The may keep in touch with the community or fundraise for them.

I: So you say the benefits are hard to quantify, so how do you measure benefits or the good outcome of your activities?

II: Certainly from the customer feedback!?

I: And do you get also feedback through CBT-I and the communities?

II: Sure. So we meet with the communities, once the project has been going for a while, maybe once a year. We go down and talk to them about problems, what they like, what they do not like...So we actually send the operations manager down or product managers, people that deal with our product. It is an ongoing dialogue, of course, there are changing things. So we have to really cooperate and work together. So we have that operator day tour where they learn how to behave, how to dress, and we then give that information back to our client.

I: For the customer, you have all types of guidelines. Is there anything else that you do for the customers, except from the tour product itself, which covers education and cultural exchange? Would you, for example, consider passenger safety as a CSR issue?

II: I suppose it is just the responsibility issue that any tour operating company has. Speak part of our corporate responsibility, especially in our area it is inheritably more dangerous, it is just the way we do travel. We go to the mountains a bit more, we might use in a remote community maybe not those correct vehicles with all the seat belts and that sort of things. So we try to make it as safe as possible for our clients. We are trying to get a balance and use a local person, who might have a little more knowledge or skills.

I: Besides the community-based tourism you offer, do you have any other type of products?

II: Our trips are pretty much mainstream. So they hit the mainstream icons, so you go to Bangkok, Kanchanaburi... We do quite a lot of walks in national parks, hill tribe trekking, cycling. We call it soft adventure. But once again, we do things like taking the rubbish out of national parks, making sure we recycle for example bottles, that sort of thing. So let's say we do a 2 weeks trip and then we have an element of sightseeing, a bit of trekking and cycling, a bit of culture, a bit of a mix of everything.

I: Okay. So, I am wondering, how Intrepid is doing CSR is probably changing over time, what factors influence your tour products or CSR policies?

II: I suppose, we just got more mature as a company, we are actually becoming more professional, we do want to make sure we are doing the right thing. But we also want to make sure we are doing the right thing and can quantify it. We are having CSR people, looking at the major issues in the world and then pushing that down through the company.

I: So, they look at global issues and see what a tour operating company can do to contribute?

II: Yes. So, our carbon offset for example started off with our CEO reading a book about climate change on a holiday in Africa. So he has come off that holiday and said let's do it. So we are pretty proactive in that way. Otherwise, we will look at issues such as Fair Trade, child labor and looking in a more professional way at how we are doing these things. One of the issues that we are looking at now is gender empowerment. So looking at how many women we have in our organization. We get to level up women up to higher positions.

I: And does that also come from the top or are these ideas developing in the local offices?

II: It probably comes from the top. But for example, I run Thailand and Cambodia. So I would have in Thailand 60% female and 40% male and in Cambodia it is 98% male... So two different societies.

I: And it that already how you want it to be in Thailand, like 40% female?

II: Yes, I think we are pretty happy with that. And the purpose is also that it provides women with more money, and this money goes back to the kids' education, so it is actually 20 year down the track. So money is spent differently which in the end does make a big change in society, the society in general becomes more educated. One thing that we learned about the whole supply chain is that we actually can control it. We can control it right down to every component of the trip. So, for example, the trek which is a 3-day component on our trip, we can control how much the drivers get paid, what food is done, how much the local guides get paid, all those little tiny bits and pieces...

I: So you are actually able to that, as I suppose it is a real big issue, especially in tourism?

II: Yes, it is a massive issue. But we were outsourcing before to trekking operators in Chiang Mai and they were giving their guides less, which is fair enough, it is a fair wage. But they were giving the guides maybe 20 dollars to buy food for 12 people. So they probably have to go to their own pockets, because they do not want to upset their passengers...so all these kind of issues. So, setting up this whole system, where we control it right through from the selling of the product to looking after the bottom end of the supply chain, we actually have a big influence across that supply chain.

I: And since when are you doing this?

II: Since six years. So that has made a big change. I would say there are some really good benefits from that.

I: But, how do you control the supply chain, who is responsible?

II: We do it. We have tour leaders and we give them training; plus we negotiate with the end supplier [...]

I: Okay. So, you said that it is hard to sell your tours in Thailand, but don't you think the segment of responsible travelers is growing and sort of influence the process of selling tours?

II: At a local level it is, but most of our customers do it from home, they actually book before they travel. They do not mind paying a premium, because they are interested in ecotourism. They are doing their research from home. But, yeah, at the local level it becomes really hard, because that person is really spontaneous, so he wants to go to a floating market, because a floating market is a classic tour here in Bangkok. We get so many people that want to go the floating markets, but we just will not sell them...It cost 250 Baht wholesale through a travel agent that is what they sell it for.

I: But how can you offer a responsible tourism product at that price...?

II: I can't. I just offer it at the price that I can offer that. That makes it hard to compete. But we will not sell in our shop until we do it ourselves. We are not selling monkey shows, or the tiger temple in Chiang Mai. We can't do it, even though we wanted to.

I: But if you offered those tours, wouldn't the people wonder why a responsible tour operating company like Intrepid sells these commercial tours?

II: Well, we are still a commercial business. So we do want to sell people to the Grand Palace or whatever it is. But we do not want to do like shopping tour or the tiger temple tours... We just sponsored a study for animal protection in Thailand, to go around and check all the animals in tourism

I: And do you sell any kind of animal tours?

II: Yes, we do sell the elephants. But there was also a study about best practices and policies.

I: So to actually summarize, CSR or responsible is basically the business you are doing, it is not perceived as an add-on or obligation, so it is part of your product?

II: Yes, definitely, I think so.

I: Okay, so going back to strategic CSR, how would you say are your activities aligned to your business strategy?

II: Yes certainly. So the demographics of client that book with us, is generally quite educated. Sometimes our brand is perceived as a backpacker brand, fairly cheap, guesthouses instead of hotels, using different methods of transport... whereby the average age of our clients is something around 33. They are all university-educated, inner city dwellers, complete demographic is probably 65% female.

I: Are you trying to reach other groups, such as younger backpackers?

II: For younger backpackers we actually have a product that is very basic, so basic accommodation, nothing included, so we will not do it too much sort of community-based tourism things. I suppose we are really more into the baby boomer demographic. So it is people, like myself, who traveled as backpackers for many years and have done it really basic, and now they got a bit more cash and they are a bit older and do not want to sleep on a hard bed anymore, but still wants to go out and visit communities, but once they go back they want a nice hotel during the night, have their air con, tv and all these nice things.

I: And how do you think about the controversial issue, to visit the communities during the day and at night you go back and indulge in all this luxury. Do you know what I mean?

II: Yes, I know what you are saying. It is like the "monkey in a zoo" and then coming home...?

I: Yes, sort of.

II: Well, we as a ground tour operator do it correctly. You have got to set the programs up, so you would probably put a homestay in there, but that would be only for one night. You go by private vehicle which has air condition, that type of stuff. The walks would not be as far.. In one of our tours we go to an eco-resort in Northern Thailand, a small lodge. So you spend the night there and you are still touching the community and everyone in the community. And that lodge is actually from the local community that works there. So you are actually still providing work, so I think it is a bit bigger picture than that. I certainly agree that if you stay for example at the Shangri-La and then you are going to take a picture of the Long Neck hill tribe people and then come back; you cannot sell that as an eco-tour. But once again, the properties that we chose are locally owned, they are pretty small boutique places with some character. So we are not really going for that high high end... I suppose 3 star plus or something like that...

I: Allright. So, how do you see the future of CSR for your company? You said issues as gender empowerment are becoming important. Are there plans for other changes? Do you want to improve things?

II: Certainly, yes. We just want to keep moving forward in what we do. I think one of the key issues for our local operations is maintaining the understanding or translation of what the West wants into local supplies. We want to train young leaders, make them really informed about issues.. it is a big challenge! We have meetings every Saturday and talk about issues. And there are local champions in our organization that are really interested and drive the process. They help us a lot.

I: And there are externals?

II: Yes, they are mostly tour leaders that we have worked with for a long time. Some of them are just so passionate about their country, looking after their country and just all the issues involved in responsible tourism. We have for each region a responsible tourism coordinator, who is a local leader. They get office time during the year, so they normally work on tours but then they also do some office work and try to get the message out to leaders, help us out in the office, try to get the involvement of everyone, which is also a big challenge. And from region to region it is harder.

I: And would you say there are more responsible tourism products in the North?

II: Yes, exactly. But there is also lots of good stuff in the South. Would you like to me to put you in touch with our CSR person, she is awesome. She is in Australia, but I believe she would be really happy to talk to you. She might know more about the theoretical side. I am obviously an operator, so I do more of the practical stuff, from the theoretical side I am probably not the person to talk to.

I: Well, I am actually focusing on the people that operate the business. I am interested in how they do it and what they think about the issue of CSR. So in general, there is one CSR department.

II: There is two, two CSR departments. And one of the two co-founders is actually very very deeply involved in the CSR side. So it is pretty much driven from them. These guys are pretty passionate about what they do, speaking part of our bonus payments for our leaders.

I: Bonus payments?

II: Yes, we pay our leaders a bonus every six months. Part of this is what they do extra in terms of CSR and responsible tourism. So, that sort of stuff is part of our whole philosophy.

I: And can you just implement it or do you have to go back to the head department?

II: Well actually we can implement it, but it always depends on the issue. If it is small stuff, we just do it, other stuff we just do in consultation. For example the foundation, we change stuff in the foundation, not regularly, but often. We try to start new project, from very down low, with very little funding and once they grow, sometimes we just go out of them in order to support something else.

I: I read about the foundation, but can you explain what kind of projects there are involved?

II: All sorts, for example an orphanage project in Kanchanaburi.

I: So if you support these projects, where it the relation to the actual tour operating business? Or is it more like a moral obligation that is not necessarily related to the business?

II: No, this is besides our usual tour operating business. Regarding the orphanage, we also have a orphanage and school tourism policy, where we do not visit orphanages and schools unless they have been really really researched.

I: Oh okay, because that is what a lot of companies do, right?

II: Yes, they just go and take their customers to a school. One of the horrible things, which is unfortunate, is that in for example Cambodia and Laos there are orphanages that have been set up for tourists. And it is absolutely disgusting what is happening there. They are taking children and bring them to the orphanages. It is pretty scary and requires a lot of research.

I: And what are your fears visiting an orphanage? Is it just not good for the kids or...?

II: You know, if there is a group going at 8 o'clock, another group is visiting at 10 o'clock and then there is another group.. you know.. And then of course you have the other side, sex tourism and that sort of stuff, you got to be really careful.

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.4 Company 4

I: I would be firstly interested in how the commitment to sustainable tourism has evolved in your company and how the company developed?

II: Actually, *Company 4* started 33 years ago, in 1979, by one single man who was student at *University x*. You know in 1970 there was a big repression from the army against the study at this university. The owner of the company was student activist at that time. He was searched by the army and needed to hide for a couple of months, I believe 2 years, in the countryside and in that time he discovered the very beginning of the Royal Projects in the North. Do you know about the Royal Projects in the North? So the Royal Project, to come back to a little bit of history, we have to go back to World War II here in the Pacific Region. Japan invaded China. Mao Zedong started to hide in the mountains and then, in 1949, he undertook what is known as the Long March or the Great March. [...] All of China became communist. In the southern part of China you had soldiers who were not able to escape. So they pass the border of Burma, Laos and Northern Thailand. And at that time, you know, there was no infrastructure. It was jungle, villages, hill tribes living like in the Middle Age... So they pass the border and started to cultivate poppy/opium. In that time the Americans came to Thailand and advised the young king of Thailand to keep them, because they would be a buffer against a possible invasion of the communist to Thailand. So they focused on opium up to the moment when the king decided, wow we have to do something and find a solution. So they had an agreement with Taiwan to send tea trees to Northern Thailand to bring back the Chinese soldiers, who became old, back to Taiwan. The others who wanted to stay there had to change the crops. And this was the very beginning of the Royal Projects, namely changing opium for clean crops, encouraging the local hill tribes to cultivate something more sustainable and to get free from cultivating drugs and cultivate something that would give money, dignity and stop them smoking opium, And then having a clean and ecological treatment of the forest because for opium you cut a lot of trees.

Back to 1979 the owner of *N.S. Travel* went to the north and discovered the very beginning of the Royal Project. He found it amazing and convinced that students in Bangkok must know that. He came back when the situation calmed down in Bangkok and started a tour company. At that time the tour company only sent students to the north to see that. So, that is the history of why it all started.

I: Okay, and from there, how did it develop?

II: The company was always trying to go to the green, making customers or the Thai tourists aware of the country side. It was not known at that time. You did not have roads in the Northern parts of Thailand, there was no infrastructure at all, people still died from lepra [...]. So, bit by bit the company changed, the profile of the customer changed. The company became more important, but always tried to make the Thai customer discover the communities or unknown provinces, we were a pioneer in forms of sustainable tourism for the years '70/'80, long before others.

I: So, it started with domestic tourism, but when did you start with inbound tourism?

II: I joined the company in November 2006, I have a socialist background. I have worked for the socialist party in Belgium and was in charge of the confederation of the youth socialists in Belgium, the international work camps and humanitarian trips. I am very much a hardcore 'sustainable being'. When we started knowing about pollution in the early years of '80, I sold my car, I bought a bike. I stick to very strict measure at home; I do not want to spend more electricity than 1000 Baht per month. I am very concerned about these issues. And we are trying to match the philosophy of the company with my own philosophy. We are trying to bring this kind of identity to the company. It is not easy because we must survive, we must live! And sustainable tourism is of course a trend but it is not yet, commercially speaking, developed enough so that we can make our living from it. So we try to develop this branch but we have to obviously work in all other ways of tourism too.

I: So to summarize, they are sustainable tourism products coexisting with more traditional tourism product.

II: Right, but I refuse to sell the very polluting form of tourism. We do not sell golf, now way, we do not sell ATV adventures in the forest, we do not sell motorbike tours around the forests, no way! We try as much as possible to use the public transportation. We call these tours the 350. Do you know the movement of Bill McKibben. It is a movement launched by an American activist, called Bill McKibben and I am a keen supporter of this! You know, the scientists believe that the maximum level of particles per billion of CO₂ is 350. It is the maximum not to go over. And in 2010 we already reached 397. So this movement puts pressure on the government to bring it back to the maximum level of 350. And I call these tours 350 because they are operated without additional pollution. So we use the existing local transportation, as these buses will leave anyway. So we put our customers on buses which will be leaving and we do not book extra cars or minivans, but use existing transportation. And at the destinations, like Bangkok, Chiang Mai etc. we try to use bike transportation as much as possible. But unfortunately we do not have customers for this. No. It is very hard to sell. We have a big problem of marketing.

I: So you would not agree that doing sustainable tourism is a marketing advantage, because nobody wants it?

II: I don't know. This is a question I do not have an answer for. I do believe that we have a problem in matching our products with the existing demand in Western countries. I don't know how to solve it. Because, you know, sustainability is a way of life, sustainability in tourism does not make any sense. Sustainability is a way of life! Reducing air-condition, the lighting, the pollution... All this should be a way of life of all the people on earth because we must protect our environment. It is something we need to do. No2, sustainability in tourism, what does it mean? It is only sustainability! Sustainability in tourism, as sustainability, has two aspects: you have the environmental aspect but you also have the economic aspect! Like TUI for example in Germany. TUI is a huge company trying to get the best possible prices from the provider so that they can make the maximum of people travel. But on the spot the people make huge efforts in terms of salary to make it possible that these people can travel. This is not sustainable.

II: Do you remember last year, when we had the problems here in Bangkok with the Red Shirts?

I: Yes.

II: Okay, so this is the perfect example. Thailand is a possible tourism destination, so there is a lot of growing infrastructure to welcome tourists from all across the world. Because of this infrastructure there is inside competition. When there is a slowdown in the worldwide economy or when there is a lot of competition between countries... tourism in Turkey has been developed, tourism in Vietnam has been developed... then we start having to fight or struggle for getting customers. And these big companies use this, if you want customers from me, okay I fill your hotel. But I do not respect your price. This is the price I want. And the business men who have built the hotel and put all their money in there, what do they do? Of course, they have to accept, rather than having the hotel closed. And then, who pays the bill... the people with the low salaries. But then, the prices increases, the economic system puts big pressure on them, they want to buy new things, they want to be integrated... but this, this is not sustainable. And finally for what? Some people consumer holiday like they consumer cigarettes, coke or chips, so what is the advantage? I have a Canadian friend who is a film maker and he tells me, tourism is bringing people who would be better to stay home to places where they have nothing to do. And for many people it is like this! They tell stories about cultures they have seen and places they have been to, but actually they do not remember anything. And this is the difference between traveling and spending a holiday in another country.

I: Okay. But how do you see the role of *Company 4* in this, how can they change that?

II: We cannot change that. This is not the type of customers our company is working with, because we are not a mass tourism operator. We as European are very lucky because our educational system is very high standard. When you go to university your brain is ready to analyze what is good, what is not good. Here in Thailand the educational system is not as developed. It will probably, but we are still in a developing country. So in the communities the education is more basic. They are more simple persons, I do not say idiots. But they are more simple, the

needs are basic and different. What is important to me is to make them opening their eyes on the danger of money. They have been living traditionally for decades, depending on agriculture. And we Europeans, we have been consuming for decades. So we know what the good is and the bad from the consuming civilization. And we try developing communities and helping communities. We would like that they remain at a level of purity, protected from the bad aspects of a consuming society. But if they have never been through it, how can they consider it bad. So it is very difficult for us to tell them: Pay attention, if you welcome tourism you will increase your salaries, your means. But we cannot tell them: Use this money for a purpose. This is something we cannot do. This would be a dictatorship. We can only teach them what the dangers of too much development could be. When I was visiting a community in the South, two years ago, I tried to explain: Imagine, you have a beautiful village on a cliff or in whatever countryside and the people come to the village because of the beautiful scenery. They stay in huts in the village and you notice that more and more people come to stay in the huts. Consequently, you want to increase your revenue. So you start building more huts and therefore you cut trees. Then you make more money, and you can start having a little school, buying a tractor, and then you cut more trees and you build more huts... At this moment you have to think about the purpose of people coming here. They come because of the beautiful surroundings, the do not come to help you necessarily. So if you destroy the beautiful landscape, people come to wonder, because there is no point to visit any longer. So you have to balance between the additional revenue and the maintenance of your village as attractive as it is. I believe that some do understand, but there is also balance in other way. Villagers wonder: So here is coming here by airplane, I have 3 kids and they see on the TV that they can buy coke, but I have no coke for them. So when I get money I would like to make my children happy... Do you understand what I mean? It is not exactly like this, it is an image. I believe that education is also really important.

I: And do you believe that sustainable tourism is also a mean to solve social problems within the community, Thailand-specific issues such as child labor or those kind of things?

II: We have to think first, what is an issue because we are here in Thailand and the society works in a different way than in Europe. In Europe maybe we go too far in the rules. We make the debate too intellectual. What is preventing children to work in Thailand... difficult. Of course, selling goods on the streets in Bangkok is a shame, but helping your parent farming rice...? What is the solution for this? Preventing social abuse from one person to another... difficult. We do believe, that when the people get more revenue, bit by bit, they can afford a better standard of life. It will take one, two, three, four, five... ten generation, but bit by bit they will be better, by being more self-confident, by being more educated they can create a better society. So yes, on a whole it will contribute to a better society, but we do not expect changes from one year to the other, or from 5 years to the 5 others... it will take time or generations.

I: Okay, interesting. So, sustainable tourism in your company comes from a and moral belief to contribute to the society or communities, but do you also believe in shared benefits, say in benefits for your company?

II: Of course, for everyone.

I: So, could you describe the benefits for tour operators?

II: Benefits for tour operators... I will speak very frankly. Normally the foreigners working in Thailand they have a salary of 50000 Baht per month. I am far from making that amount of money because I believe that... I am 55, I would like to end my career on a positive touch, I would like this department to have more staff, I would like to create more jobs, I would be very happy if we were 5 people working here because it would mean that my work, associated with the work of the corporators, would provide 5 more people with the chance of having a job. The communities, yes definitely. In our way of working we never discuss contracts. We do not try to get it for nothing and sell it expensively. We accept the price, it must be reasonable of course, but we accept the price. We never discuss a contract unless we believe it is reasonable. But when we accept it, we accept it. It means that we correctly pay all the persons involved in the programs. At the level of the company it is also important to bring a good balance, because then we will be able, our colleagues to increase their revenue.

I: Okay. So a lot of companies these day are doing sustainable tourism actually seize the marketing and PR advantages. Do you think that makes it hard for N.S. Travel to survive since there are so many competitors which are actually 'greenwashing'?

II: Of course, of course, it is really hard. People do not understand. European agents do not understand us. I give you one example that I got yesterday from Holland. Let me find it... So, I was consulted by an agent from the Netherlands. They have a group of people growing flowers in the Netherlands and they want to come to Thailand to visit as much as possible these aspects of the country. So, I proposed a tour of 10-12 days. They leave Bangkok by coach to Sukothai. In Sukothai they will visit an organic farm. In the North they will go to the Royal Flora in Chiang Mai, which is the main purpose of the trip. Then I make them visit the Royal Projects, because there they have huge amount of orchids, produced there. So I believe it is interesting for people involved in horticulture in the Netherlands, right? Then I bring them to... where they cultivate tea before it was opium and then they go to... where they cultivate coffee. So, I believed it was really bringing them to the green. But we could not agree on the transportation. I advised them to take this transportation, they wanted another one... We have to match for the transportation and when all the arrangements for the transportation were already made, the agent told me: Oh, I did not know, but the customer told me that he already got an offer from Thomas Cook. And what Thomas Cook offers is a very traditional program, bringing them to places that have absolutely nothing to do with the original request of the customer. And now the agent asked me to make a quotation based on the program offered by Thomas Cook. It means that I have to be cheaper, otherwise I will not sell. So, what do I have to do? I have to go to the participants and say: Come on, 1000... you make it for 800, okay?

I: But do you stick to the route you suggested or do you have to adapt the route to the one from Thomas Cook?

II: No, no. I have to give the price based on the program made by Thomas Cook. And I mean, I am sorry but I stick to my model... Then I say: I am sorry, but buy from Thomas Cook. This is not the way we do it. I mean, if we are sustainable we must be honest with ourselves. And it is difficult, of course. It does not make me happy because I have already been working hours and hours on this and then, finally, they buy from Thomas Cook. So, all the hours that I spent on this is time that I lose for something else, maybe marketing. Look, you can read it [*citing the e-mail*]... Look, I do not want to appear unprofessional, but this does not sound very serious. The guy has already a program which he finds superb. So, what else can we do? I can of course spend my time quoting it, but this would not really work. Thomas Cook likes to squeeze local providers in order to bring the cheapest possible rates to their guest after having taken a comfortable commission from them. We are reputed for being a local specialist and sustainable company. We will never come up with a cheaper price than Thomas Cook! So the chances that Mr. X will consider our program are almost nil. This program is a quick tour for mass tourists. They will not visit, they will run and have a glimpse on it all. [...]

I: So, you are really honest in these matters, right?

II: Yes, of course! No way, I will not compromise for money!

I: Okay, but on the other hand, do you believe that doing sustainable tourism could also be a competitive advantage or don't you perceive that at all?

II: Of course, it is very very hard. I do believe there is a way of fetching customers here. But the real sustainable customers, they do not buy from the traditional channel of distribution. And I do believe that the marketing is still far too traditional. We have probably the right product, we can adapt it, we are on the right track... People in Europe are willing to buy this, but we do not match, because we probably do not fetch them in the right place.

I: And how do you see sustainable tourism development evolving in the future?

II: No idea... I will continue working bit by bit. You know, when I started working I was in my early 20' and I was working in a high end restaurant in Belgium. I started in hospitality. And after 16 years in hospitality I went back to school and switched to tourism. And one of the

very first restaurants, where I was working, always told me, when you have a concept or an idea and you believe it is a good concept, you do not compromise. You build up an identity. If you don't stick to it for money or any kind of business you will never build up your own identity. You will lose your flavor and I do believe it is true. Or we become the one who sell any product just because we need business, then yes, we will become any tour operator. If we stick to the niche we really want to develop, sooner or later we will be known as specialist in this niche.

I: Okay. I was just thinking about it... you also offer traditional tour products, so for the request you were talking about earlier, was it not possible to combine traditional and sustainable tour products. I was wondering if you are doing that at all or if this is against your philosophy?

II: No, but in terms of production, we are only 2 working here. And for the moment we cannot afford any third person. And this means we are all by ourselves. So it means, we make marketing, we make the production, we write the invoices, we read e-mails... we do it all. I would love to have more time to only concentrate on the production, to read articles, to have meetings and to adapt our production, but I don't have time. I would like to start cutting off more traditional programs. For the beaches for example, I would like to cut off Phuket, only keeping a couple of hotels which are really sustainable. But I don't have time. I need to inspect, I need to go there, I need to see what it is. It means that I need the budget to go there, I don't have the budget and I don't want to ask for it. And if I go to Phuket, who takes care of the incoming e-mails. So, we are a little bit stuck. We progress, but at the speed of a snail.

I: Okay. [smiling] But I am really impressed from what I have heard because you are so honest and passionate about your work.

II: Okay, I will show something that I posted on a discussion forum about sustainable tourism. It is not just sustainable tourism, it is sustainability in general. We must be sustainable. In Thailand they think about building a nuclear plant. Okay, why? Because of the need of the population... Okay, go around all the offices in Thailand, and you will see the air-condition, people wearing jackets because it is too cold. For that we need a nuclear plant? Why don't we make the air-condition a little less freezing so that the people don't need to wear clothes...? I am much attached to this, because I am old already and I saw the evolution and it makes me sad, not for me but for you and the kids you will have. [...] There is a point where we have to find a good balance between consuming and sustainability. Consuming is against sustainability. We have to consume but in a wise way...

I: That is true, but it is just really difficult to convince people, right?

II: Yes! This is not the problem of the government, or the problem of providers, it is the problem of the citizens! You know, in the year '80, when I was a kid we used to eat strawberries when it was season [...]. And now it really fashionable to eat strawberries in January. Come on, be serious! It is because of my background, and all what I saw and see for the future, that I think like this! That's it! [smiling] And I believe when I look into the mirror, that I asked myself the right questions! I think it like the 4 noble Truths in Buddhism, which is basically asking the right questions about suffering. Buddhism is tackling the problem of suffering, not physically, but all the possible ways of suffering. The 4 noble Truths are: Knowing that there is suffering, Accepting that there is suffering, Finding a solution to suffering and Applying the solution to suffering. This is one of the main rules in Buddhism. And if this would be applied in all the aspects of society, we would be far more happy!

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.5 Company 5

I: Could you tell me something more about your position within *Company 5*?

II: Actually I am responsible for every program in this company. Actually we are a group of companies under the same management, something like that... they are all managed by the same team. So, we have six products: One is called *Boat x*. This is very antique and nice barge that we renovated. It is made of teak wood and very very unique, as it is hard to find nowadays. There are only a few left in the world, and we have three of them in Bangkok. We have another five June Boats... let me show you... Yes, we have two of the Suwan Macha, we do 4 days/3nights cruises in Phuket, so we go to all the beautiful islands in the South of Thailand. And we do little adventure, like diving, snorkeling, trekking, rafting or whatsoever they have... and visiting villages. And we have this *Boat x*, doing day and sunset cruises. [...] And in the North we have lodges. We don't call them hotels or resorts. They are very unseen, peaceful and private because we are the only ones operating in that area. We are working with the Population and Community Development Association. We are working with them and we are the only one allowed to do that there. And again, you can find little adventures in the lodges, like elephant riding, rafting, trekking... or we can take painting classes with villagers or flower arranging classes...

III: Or handicrafts...

II: Or you can also experience spiritual things and learn something about the belief of the hill tribes. You can do bird watching... just a lot of these things.

I: So, you do a lot of those eco-tours?

II: Yes! We are a eco/community-based tourism company, that is what we are.

I: Okay. And has that always been the case? Did you start with ecotourism products?

II: Yes! Even we have these cruises, we do it to help the people in Japan that were affected by the tsunami. So part of the revenue goes to these victims.

III: And we are doing something similar for the people in the South of Thailand...

I: Because of the floodings?

III: Yes, exactly.

II: So next month, on the 19th, I tell you, we are going to donate part of our money to the south people in Thailand.

I: Alright. And is that like a new thing you are doing or have you done that before, like for the tsunami in 2004?

II: Yes, we were not her at that time of course [smiling] but the company did. As I said, we are an ecotourism/community-based tourism company... [handing out brochures]

I: So, back to your cruise products, it says in your brochure these are eco-cruises. What is meant by that?

II: Well, we emphasize on living by the nature, even the paper we use is recycled. If tourists use towels, we write that it is better to reuse towels, just to save the world. So, we are always concerned about nature, saving the world...

III: We also use the eco-trips to educate the customers about what is important. We will tell them that from a long long time ago we tell them what is used to be like and that we got different issues to deal with nowadays, such as the pollution. So we need to change it. So, for example, when you use the plastic bag, stop using it and use the green bag from us. We will give them a green bag for shopping, that they are supposed to use instead of a plastic bag. We also bring them to plant flowers or trees and this kind of trip...

I: Referring to CSR, is that a term that you use in daily business? How would you define it?

II: We are using CSR in everything we do in the office.

I: But it is not on your website, is it? It does say sustainable tourism or community-based tourism...

III: Well, right now we are trying to promote that we are doing it this way. Because before we came here to do things, they lead the customers the wrong way.

II: We are going to do some changes on our website. I already recommended to put a separate item, called CSR. But I just recommended it in the last two meetings, so it is not going to happen very quickly, but we are doing the changes. Because I feel, Asian Oasis is doing a lot of

thing regarding communities and helping people, so why should we not put it in here [*pointing at website*]? And this is also for you [*handing over a merchandise bag made out of fabric*]! So, we are trying to promote use of them instead of using plastic bags. Also, client who come up on board... We will stop at places where they can do shopping and we hand out these bags, so they do not have to use plastic bags.

III: We also have activities on the boat to allow customers to draw on these bags...

I: Oh okay. And back to the changes on your website, why do you want to put that new CSR section on the website? What are the motivations?

II: Because it represents our company. So, they will know that we not only aim for profit, but that we help people with every trip we launch. So, just to create awareness among our customers. There are two groups of customers, the individual customer (FIT) and the other group, which are agents. So they should know that we are not trying to aim for as much profit as possible, no, because we are helping people etc.

I: And, do you feel this is getting increasingly important, for example are more and more agents asking for this type of business philosophy?

II: No, we can actually not say that they are really interested. They just want profit, these people. That is why we emphasize that we are a CSR-company and not trying to make much profit from our business.

III: The main purpose of this company is to help people in the hill tribes, who do not have the chance to do things, because they do not have money for their living. So we need to help them.

II: And if these people in the hill tribes try to earn a money for living, they mostly do what...

III: ...they are drug dealers or something.

II: They grow plant that turn into drugs, poppy... So the people are very fond of planting these plant and producing drugs, which is no good.

I: So, you are trying to alternative opportunities for earning money to these people?

II: Yes, if your friend in Bangkok, given that she is Thai, applies for a job in our company in the North, we will not accept her because we are trying to use the hill tribe people. We try to recruit these people just to make them earn their living. And we have to spend a lot of money to train them because sometimes they cannot talk properly, so we have to train them to talk properly, we have to train them to do documentations, we have to train them how to use computers, how to be good tour guides, how to speak good English. So we spend a lot of money training them, and yet, we still go that way! Otherwise, if we keep this money and just say: Hey, I just call some new graduates from Bangkok to do the job, for us this is good, but it is not community-based then. So, we try to use the villagers, the local people, train them and let them work for us. And, even they have their traditional dancing in the village, we say: Why don't you dance in front of our guests and get some money... good for yourself...

I: And do you also provide the opportunity for a 2-way-communication?

II: Yes, it is a 2-way...

III: Because the villagers tell us for example that they want the lights along the street, because the way they are walking home is quite dark. They asked us to bring these lights to them...

[*III showing a presentation on community-based tourism*]

I: How would you explain the connection between global warming and community-based tourism, referring to this presentation?

II: Because it is an eco-tour. Like I said, we don't use plastic bags, we use energy-saving lights. We only use 5 W in the toilets, but somebody else would maybe use 60 W... So this kind of lighting, this kind of shopping bags, towels... Everything is connected to global warming, because all chemicals, all machines... We even encourage the tourists to do cycling, instead of hiring motorcycles, we let them hire our bikes. So everything to reduce global warming of course... that is why eco or community-based tourism can be connected with global warming. See... [*pointing at quote from presentation*], "we have to learn more from the hill tribe people than to teach". Actually, we teach them a lot, but we also learn from them.

III: We learn from them, how we can live with the nature with no technologies. Have you ever been to the North? You know, it is great, you find the peace there... It is really green, you can hear the sound of the birds in the morning, we cannot find this in Bangkok...

[*III showing pictures from the products and villages*]

III: You see, everything is made from nature..., no bricks, not that modern..., if you have time should try [*smiling*]. "The community wants to become modern, but not if negative impacts influence that development"...

I: So, what does that mean? They want to become modern...

II: They want to become modern because they believe that Bangkok people are so modern, so fun, but if they become modern they lose what is in the nature. So we have to explain them, educate them that it does not necessarily have to be that modern. Because there a good points of staying the same way, they only need to be more educated. Modern in the spiritual way, not in a materialized way...

III: Actually, the hill tribe villagers want to be modern, they want to have the technology, but if they have a chance to get those things, they have to lose something. They lose something, just like the nature around them.

I: So, they actually tell you, they want that modernization, what are you telling them then?

III: We tell them to have the technologies is just to help them to be more comfortable, but otherwise it is destroying your beautiful scenery.

I: So, what about EarthCare? Is this basically for students and corporate travel, or...?

III: Yes. We do have it for the students and corporate travel. This is the real eco-tour.

[*Unforeseen break, II has to leave*]

I: So, back to CSR, how would you define CSR in your company? How do you understand it?

III: Okay, for Asian Oasis is just something that we feel that we have to help a lot of people around us. The people who do not have a chance to live like us, to learn like us, to have the education. Since we have the chance to do this, why don't we do it. We need to share.

I: Okay, so nowadays CSR has become really popular and a lot of companies are doing eco-tourism...

III: Yes!

I: ... so, do you think it is difficult to differentiate between for example your company that has been doing it for so long and companies which just do for greenwashing and to enhance the reputation.

III: Well, about the differentiation... I think from the marketing perspective it is a problem, but for us, we just feel it is nothing... Nothing, not just the image. We will do in the same way, what we have to do and what we like to do. Because, even though people don't know that we are doing CSR and helping the hill tribe people, we, ourselves know that we are doing it. You know, what I mean?

I: Okay, so it is not about marketing or getting more customers?

III: I mean for the marketing it is kind of important to tell the world that we are doing CSR, because it is very popular. But we are doing it and we are planning to do it with the website just to people that we are doing it. But we will not put a lot of effort or budget on promoting it, because we think it is not necessary.

[*Interviewee IV enters the conversation*]

I: So, you are saying that you are doing things to help the communities, but do you also believe that CSR has some value or benefit for the business itself?

III: Yes, it can help us to benefit, since... I mean CSR is quite popular for big corporations like car makers etc. They are trying to promote that they love the earth and that they care about the earth, they are trying to fight global warming. And we can contact them and tell them that we

are doing the business of CSR and that we are willing to help them to make their trips, like eco-tours or something. So we contact them and they might become customers, so we gain the benefits...

I: Okay, I see. Since you have been doing CSR professionally for so long, do you perceive a competitive advantage against other eco tour operators?

III: In Thailand there is...

I: Yes, especially in Thailand there are a lot of those companies, right?

III: No. I think there are only a few who are doing eco-tours. But everyone can do it, even though they are not specialist in this way. But they still can do it.

I: So you think in general, that Thailand's tourism industry is not that developed with regards to eco-tourism or responsible/sustainable tourism?

III: I think in Thailand this thing is kind of new, the CSR travel.

VI: I think it is difficult in Thailand. We have quite a number of companies which are socially responsible. But I don't think they are competitors. I think it works both ways, we support the communities and they support us. [...] We support hill tribe people and at the same time they provide us with...

III: ... like the car, the van...

VI: ... with everything. I mean we have a lodge in their village and they work for us and at the same time they promote their culture.

III: But, according to our identity, companies which are really into eco-tours... there is only a small number. Based on my experience, there only 4-6 companies which do this...

IV: I think there are different ways of doing it, some companies invest in it, like they donate to communities or the charity. But for us, we put ourselves in the area and try to help them and also educate them about the environment, and at the same time to educate our customer about the culture and environment.

I: Okay, that is interesting. And do you plan on doing more in the future, like new or different projects?

III: About the CSR... In Bangkok we still have the eco-cruises, like I told you.

I: Are all these cruises eco-cruises?

III: No, it is just a part of our products. But we are trying to tell people to stop hurting earth by using something.

IV: We don't have this activity in the South, but we have charity. Our foundation Himmappaan...

I: Okay, I read that. What exactly is it about?

IV: It is about reforestation. We go to the forests that are deforested and then we try to plant trees and try to educate the local about the importance of the forests in the area; and tell them how to protect the forest and take care of the forest.

III: Because in the South of Thailand there is a lot of illegal deforestation. And do you know, what Himmappaan means? It is the name of the forest in Thai, a mythology... the beautiful forest which has a lot of mythical creatures...

IV: Yes, so this is just one project of Himmappaan [pointing at *EarthCare Project*]. We are planning to do more, but it was just founded two years ago.

I: And this project with the students is that for local students actually?

IV: Anyone... We can bring university or college students to that area and teach them about the environment. And we can also do team building.

III: It is not only for local students. We had students from the UK...

I: Okay. Is it actually difficult to reach and get the customers you want for your trips, for example the environmentally- and culturally-conscious travelers?

III: Actually we are doing 90% of the business with people from overseas. And they just want to escape from noisy things, cities... seeking for silence, peace... We are dealing with travel agencies overseas, and this is kind of the right target for them.

IV: And if there are interested the can also go to our website and make an inquiry...

I: And regarding CSR issues, do you consider Thailand-specific issues such as child protection as issues that you can address with your CSR policies?

III: You mean, how can we define CSR, or?

I: Well, yeah. You benefit the communities with your work, but would you also say that CSR is solving issues. If I say for example, child labor... So a child is working somewhere and you got to know of it, is solving this particular issue part of you CSR policy or would you say that is a different story?

III: Well, it is not that kind of thing. But, sometimes you cannot solve these sorts of issues by ourselves, but we can be a part of it. And if there is anything that we can do, that we try to help [...]. And, in our office, we turn off the air-condition at 5 to save the world!

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.6 Company 6

I: Well, I have read on the Internet that *Company 6* is strategically linked to *Company x*, so could you explain what is behind these two organizations and how they operate?

II: Our chairman has been working in community development activities since 1974, during that time and several years after that, maybe a decade or a decade and a half; PDA was solely dependent on donations from international organizations and some private philanthropic organizations. However if you are a non-governmental organization and you are one of the largest non-governmental organizations it becomes a very tricky and complicated process keeping everyone in place and making them feel that their employment is secure. If you are a NGO, normally you would have donors who would fund a certain project and give it a time frame. Very often it is a 3-year project, if you are lucky it is extended once more, if you are very lucky a third time, but very very rarely a fourth time. Or donors almost never fund projects indefinitely. And donors usually assume that after 3 or 6 years the project will be self-sustaining. I have not seen a project that became self-sustaining after 3 years. I do not think it is there. I think it is a unicorn. It is an imaginary creature that does not exist. So, I would say donors are not realistic about their expectations, donors are there for a political reason and it makes them look good. And NGOs, especially the smaller ones who do not have the power, who do not have the crowd, who do not have the social standing like our chairman would be at a loss trying to find money to support projects. And very often they grab anything that comes their way, even if it is a project they do not totally support, but because there is money there, they will do it. So in other words, they have become a street worker who will sleep with anybody, who has money to give them. And that is the way. I might be a bit too harsh with my comparison but nonetheless it is a fact and it is happening. So one of the turning points..., and *Company 6* may have been like this in the beginning, and whoever gave money, whoever had money, you know, thank you! And we will do the project as we want it and as you want it, we always try to balance and keep everybody happy. The donors are happy that they are doing projects correctly, spending money properly, but at the back *Company 6* is thinking, how can we even improve on this model? How can we go beyond? The time frame allowed by the donor agency, is there any way going beyond the 3 year-, 6 year- or 9 year-period that we have been funded. So, how do you do that? Obviously the answer does not lie within the donor

agency, because no donor agency will agree or would have the financial resources to support what we have in mind. If you are to look at the project, most projects are highly focused. If it is a water project and the project says you have to build so many water tanks in so many villages over such and such a period, and then what do you do next? So, okay, you address the water tank and water supply problem. But water is not the only problem. They might have business. What will feed them, what will support their children, how will they get money to buy food or money to buy clothes for the children or send them to school?

I: And that is basically where your company comes in and tries to support those communities?

II: Okay, do not go ahead...So, what do you do? The donor agency will say, oh we already funded you. And the stipulation of the project is only water. So it is very narrowly focused. So if you want to have another project, say for example economic development activities or livelihood projects you have to start looking for another donor. It might be the same donor, but they are scratching their head and go like, what is wrong with you and your planning... And so, what do you do? Okay, now they have water, they have some economic activities, what about financing? Who will attend to that? And if there is a need for financing, who will finance the financing project? Will it still be the donor agency or somebody else? So, when you start doing projects you find several niches, you will find several gaps that need to be filled. So when you start working with a community, there are so many windows that are closed. And once you open them, you see, oh my god there is something that we did not see and so on and so forth. So, who will fund that? Nobody! So, we have to look for our own sources of funds to address all of these other projects that were not addressed in the first instance. One turning point for *Company 6*, I believe although it is not said explicitly, was the breakup of the Soviet Union 20 years ago. When the Soviet Union broke up, this caused a lot of funding problems for NGOs in the East. And the reasons for this is, because, say for example the German government or the Swedish or Danish government saw: oh, why are we sending money half way across the world, when within our neighborhood there are so many opportunities for developing projects. So the breakup of the Soviet Union opened up competitors for funds. And because of that and because the funding agencies had been given assistance to Asia for a long time, they said, oh maybe we should reassess our priorities. So a lot of that money became harder and harder to get. The other turning point for Thailand was in the late 1980's, early 1990's Thailand became one of the Asian Tigers. In terms of economy it was heating up, it was becoming very very strong. And because of this image, donor agencies were not at ease with giving money to a country which was perceived, I must emphasize perceived more progressive than others. And so for PDA it was very difficult to look for funding. And so our chairman said we cannot longer depend solely on donor funding. We have to look for an innovative method of funding. And he was able to do this by creating a corporation, a separate entity – a corporation that is tax paying, registered and would be capable of starting up activities that generate income. And that is totally separate from our company. The point here is that *Company 6*, as a NGO, is prohibited by the government to generate income. It can only support its activities through donations, but we go over that obstacle with the creation with a separate entity, that was created for the sole purpose of generating funds and donating profits to *Company 6*.

I: But your company is basically a tour operator?

II: No, it is only one of many activities that generate income here. So the *Restaurant x* is another one. Then there are the tours, the museum and the handicraft shop.

I: Okay. So from the perspective of your company that offers community-based tourism tours, how would you define CSR? Is that a term that you use or is it used differently in the tourism industry?

II: You know, the term CSR was created long after, it is a newcomer! Now it is the buzzword for all of these newcomers. So students and professors like to use catchy words like this and try to fit us in with that. You know, we have been doing these things long before the term CSR was created.

I: Okay. And you as a tour operator or as the manager... on the one hand you are trying to achieve to get more financial resources for *Company 6* and on the other hand you are trying to improve the life in the communities. How are you doing this?

II: Okay. One example is, we used to have trekking tours with one of the big organizations, like Intrepid. Intrepid used to send us, unfortunately they had to stop for internal financial reasons, and they used to send us two trekking groups per week. And we looked at this as a very good opportunity to assist and pulling in villagers and having villagers participate in tourism activities and benefit from them. So the partnership between *Company x* and *Company 6* provided income generating opportunities for villagers. If we were greedy, we would say, let us just keep all of the money and not give it to the villagers, because the villagers are just nobody... We could have adapted that posture. But we felt that it was more important to... Okay, there are certain services that villagers can provide, so let us use them. For me it is less headache, I do not have to have a vehicle to transport them from one place to another. All I need to do is to call somebody and have them arrange to take tourists to the start of the trekking trail. If the tourists need porters, than you tell them, okay we need 5 porters to carry the bags of the visitors. At the homestay, a village group manages the homestay facilities. And the women who prepare food, we made it a point that villagers were employed to prepare food. It was very easy for us to have our guide, our porters to prepare the food instead of hiring villagers. But we did not want to cut them off. So we took them in, and have the villagers prepare food for us. We provided them with other income generating opportunities, like the villagers prepare a cultural presentation. We made tribal costumes available which they could rent to tourists. So if the tourists wanted to be photographed in traditional costumes they could do that for a small fee. We organized that the villagers were able to sell handicrafts. These were some of the opportunities that were created. So how does *Company 6* come in? It created or encouraged the villagers to set up a village bank. So whatever business opportunities were set up by the villagers should benefit the village bank. Now, whenever a group of woman prepares food and they are paid, 10% of what they are paid goes to the village bank. Whenever a group of woman provides a cultural presentation for the tourists, again 10% is deducted, the homestays 10%, the porters 10%, whatever is sold, 10% of that goes to the village bank. So the village bank is the entity that controls all of the different activities in the communities. PDA Tour does not do the community developing activities. So we are more just the source of money, and we tell them what we need. And we expect a certain level of quality, we have a minimum quality. Otherwise they will say, oh it is good enough and then we will say, but my clients do not like this. My clients feel that they deserve better. And so if you not meet these requirements we might take our business elsewhere. You know, that is how a tour company operates.

I: So you are basically deciding on the standards of the tours that you offer?

II: Well, there has to be standards. And the standard has to meet the requirements of the client. You cannot say take it or leave it. And they cannot do that either. Otherwise the partnership would not work. We have to make compromises; we have to be willing to provide what is required.

I: Okay, so the tours provide socio-economic benefits, how about environmental concerns?

II: We do not have very much components on the environment because we are trying to leave a small footprint on our tours. The trekking tours rely on human power, the only gasoline and fuel is needed for sending them from the city to the start of the trekking trail and picking them up from the end of the trail.

I: Looking from the CSR perspective, although you do not use that term very often, are there any other responsibilities that you have with your business? So, you have responsibilities towards the communities for example, but do you also perceive certain responsibilities towards you customers or your employees?

II: You know, the people who like to use CSR they are just theoretical. And they love it...!

I: Well, maybe I put it in differently, has your business changed because of changing customer profiles. There are more and more people interested in community-based tourism products, so does that have an influence on your operations or policies?

II: We have been doing community-based tourism since about the year 2000. But, you know, you have probably heard of the organization TEATA?

I: Yes, I actually met the head of the organization in Bangkok.

II: Yes, she is such a wonderful person, but she does not know us. She has never heard of us or tries to keep us outside of her loop. I was looking at some of their publications and I was very surprised that *Village x* was not even mentioned in one of their recent publications, the CSR-MAP. And what is the hill tribe village that as pictured in the document, it was a *Village y*. And I found that strange. And I have absolutely no idea, but it look like people who have put up all these lists of how things should or should not be done, want to form an exclusive group.

I: And for what reasons do you think that is?

II: I do not know. It is just kind of a feeling. But I have serious doubts or strong reservations about 'partying with those animals' (laughing). They are a different species for me. So you want to do it that way, but we have been doing it this way since 2000...

I: Okay. May I ask another question, because I read on your website that you just engage with certain communities, and for example totally leave out the Long Neck Karen village?

II: We do not do Long Neck Karen, because we believe that tourism to Long Neck Karen supports a slavery project. They are like slaves in this. And all of those tour companies that send their clients to Long Neck Karen village, they support this slavery. Not too long ago there was a video on the BBC about slaves on fishing boats. And these slaves were supposed to be Cambodian people who were promised a decent paying job on fishing boats. And for three months they would be stuck on these boats, and whenever they were trying to leave they would be shot or killed. That is a rather extreme example of slavery. But for Long Neck Karen people... I think there was an anthropologist who wanted to study the Long Neck Karen. She asked to sleep at the Long Neck Karen village and after one night she said she could not stand it, she had to leave. What she said was, they were given rice that is how they are paid. They are paid in the form of rice! And I said, so what about vegetables and meat... No, just rice.

I: So, basically the cheapest... But who is paying them then, the tour companies?

II: Well, most of the villagers are not real villagers... They are set up. There was no village there before the Long Neck Karen were trucked in. We go there and there is nothing you will learn from them. It is just a photo opportunity. So it is like a freak show, oh look the elephant man or oh look the woman with facial hair... it is so bad...

I: So they are basically exploiting the villagers?

II: It is the worst form of exploitation, I think. And I used to get a lot of advice, that I should not talk about these kind of issues... 'what you are saying is not true'... Whenever I talk about the Long Neck Karen and the way they have been treated, I have heard my share of criticism. People were embarrassed that I spill the beans on the Long Neck Karen. But I am not the first one to talk about it and I am not going to be the last... But the people out there they need to know that this is not a kind of tourism activity that should be supported. Nothing good will ever come out of that. So if you go there you have to spend no less than 250 Baht for a visit. But you can find there you will see in ten minutes. And probably by the tenth minute you will be ready to get sick... Some people pay even more, up to 500 Baht.

I: But is there nobody who has tried to start changing that or improve the situation?

II: No. Because I think there are a lot of people on the pay role.

I: So they do not want it to change because they are benefiting from it?

II: A lot of people, not only the owners of the projects are involved, that is what I am guessing. So a lot of people are taking advantages of the Long Neck Karen. And the thing is, there a no Long Neck Karen communities in Thailand. All of these people come from across the border. They are all Burmese. In fact, almost 30 years ago, when I went Mae Hong Son province, we made a visit to a Long Neck Karen village. And that village was very close to the Thai-Burmese border. It is most probably, that with the first community in Mae Hong Son people saw, wow that is a gold mine... A lot of people are interested to photograph for 250 Baht this exotic form of women. Why do not we replicate it?

I: So the people got imported to Thailand, but the actual culture of the Long Neck Karen does exist?

II: There is this culture in Burma, yes! The tribe is called differently but they traditionally put coils around their neck and they start really young and never take them off. Some people claim that they are forcing them to wear those coils, but I really doubt that. They are authentic people, but they are just not from here.

I: Okay, back to the activities you do with your communities, do you also engage in a dialogue with them and see what they want?

II: That is what we are doing. The community development activities are decided in the office. And here all of the tourism activities are decided. But if we say our clients require better quality food, we cannot just go to the community and tell them off. I have to force it through *Company 6* and they tell them, we need better quality food. Maybe we can have somebody from *Restaurant x* and give them training on food preparation. And this has been done! We have done this several times. We observed that the quality of the massage that our clients are getting is not good enough. Our clients are complaining that the massage service provided was sub-standard. So I tell them and then soon after that they get additional training on how to provide a massage. And this is how the feedback system works.

I: And how does it work with your tour guides? Are they trained by you?

II: All of our tour guides are licensed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. We are the only tour agency that registers with the tourist police. None of the other companies even bothers to register trekking. And it is actually a requirement. The Tourism Authority of Thailand and the tourist police in particular are very concerned about tourists getting lost in the jungle or getting into an accident in the jungle. So they want to make sure that whenever the tourists are trekking in the jungle that they know about it and know who to point a finger to, in case anything bad happens to a client. If a client goes missing they will know who was responsible for them.

I: Okay, and is it also important for you, so that you assure a certain degree of safety for the client?

II: Oh yes, very very much so! This is another way of saying, we guarantee our tours. If anything happens to you the tourist police know about it. We are willing to put our reputation and none of the other tour companies that are going on trekking tours even bother. So if anything happen to them, they will be just missing.

I: Okay. About your customers, what type of customers do you get?

II: Most of our customers are walk-in. Many of them have read about us in the Lonely Planet, or some other guide book. A few of them by word-of-mouth, somebody told them they had fun with PDA. Our website is also important, some of them had looked through our website. We are beginning to get booking well in advance, and this is how I really want it to become. I want more advance bookings, so that gives us a lot more opportunities to find other people to join.

I: And do you think it is difficult to get customers, with regard to competing companies who offer product at much cheaper prices?

II: Yes! A lot of customers on a tight budget, they see another tour company offer basically the same thing at a cheaper rate, so they are going to choose for them.

I: Okay. I am asking because I just heard travelers talking yesterday about Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, saying that they would get a day of trekking here for 1500 Baht, but in Chiang Mai they would get two days for the same price.

II: Yes, and that is the problem about Chiang Mai. Chiang Mai has too many tour companies competing for too few clients, so that they have to go to very drastic cost reductions. And it is a very bad thing because you are killing yourself; you are killing the environment and destroying opportunities. It is bad for the village, because in order to survive as a tour company, they have to pump in ten times more clients going into the village. Do you want that, like 100 000 people going into a village when 1000 would do? You look at the system of Bhutan...

I: Yes, they have to spend a certain amount of money per day...

II: Exactly, and they do not make it cheap. They do not want their tourism to be like Thailand's. So they screen their clients, they do not want backpackers who do not want to spend money, that is off their list. And because they do not get that many clients, the villagers' life is more or less preserved. For me, as the curator of the hill tribe museum it is important to do that because you cannot treat a country like a cultural island. Bhutan was closed to tourism for so many years, and it is because of this, that they were able to preserve their culture and their way of life. Their traditional practices are more or less intact. Opening up the country for tourism is a risk and in order to minimize that risk they have to screen their clients. Thailand did not even think about that. For Thailand it is mass tourism, the more the merrier... And you look at the tribal communities in Thailand, where are they... you don't know it anymore...

I: And, if it is so difficult, what are you doing to get more clients that are interested in quality tours?

II: Okay, we have not reduced our prices to 'Night Bazar rates'. We have maintained our prices. If I wanted more customers, I say, okay let's just cut our prices and adapt them to those of those people. That would mean I would have less money to give to the villagers and PDA. We are duty-bound to maintain our rates, but also provide the minimum level of services, that is hopefully higher than what the tour companies the Night Bazar provide. So, we try to give a higher level of quality. For example, there is a very popular tour company here, it picks up tourists and dumps them back on a pick-up truck, and they are like cattle. Well, if that is what they want and they think that is chic or authentic... sure. But we do not do that here.

I: Okay, one last question, you said you are providing training for the communities. But do you also have some kind of cultural exchange, so that the communities get to learn something from the tourists?

II: Oh, no no. We do not want the community to learn anything from the tourists; we want them to teach the tourists. I would prefer a one-way traffic in teaching. You know, if we have tourists and we wanted the tourists to teach the communities... I must admit at one point of my career we were just doing that, we were trying to teach the local people. But then later on, I had a change of mind. I said, oh my god, I am doing the very thing that I want to prevent. I want to preserve the culture of the people, but how can I expect that if I am teaching them foreign things. It might be personally satisfying for tourists to help a villager. It makes them feel good, but what do you learn? You learned nothing from the experience. Did you even learn how they survive; no you were too busy teaching them...

I: But what do you mean by teaching, literally teaching?

II: Just anything. You are trying to transfer some of your own culture to them.

I: Okay, but does that not automatically happen?

II: Yes, it does happen, but I want to minimize that form of transfer.

I: And do you tell that your customer before? Are there certain guidelines or principles of traveling with your company?

II: We have a video that we show to all of our trekking groups that go on these trips. And in the very end of the 35-minutes video, we say: You may be highly educated, but never think that villagers are uneducated. Just because they did not go to school like you does not mean they are uneducated. Because, of what use would an engineer or accounting degree be if you got lost in the jungle? So, whenever you are going to a village you have to have an open mind and if you are lucky you might learn something from people who are called 'uneducated'. Because, what is education? Education is a means to provide you with skills to survive in whatever environment you wish to live in.

I: And with your tours you would like the client to learn something?

II: As much as possible. Our guides need to be stimulated. If you do not stimulate the guide, nothing will come out of your guide. If you are just walking and are not attentive and do not care about this and that, my guide will probably not be as good of a resource. He will tell you where to go, but you probably will not get as much. It all depends on the client. Of course some are just 'chatterboxes' and talk a lot, some are not. You have to have a good match of client and guide.

I: Okay. I looked at your brochures yesterday and saw that you are also doing for example half-day tours in Chiang Mai or bicycle tours. Are these tours done with the same philosophy as your community-based products, are they focused on responsible travel?

II: Well, if I could choose, I would rather not sell the half-day tours, because they are very expensive and if you have a one-day tour, you better get this. But in general they are all responsible tourism products.

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.7 Company 7

[...]

II: But on the other hand there are many people who like to support the ideas about Fair Trade but they just don't pack in something called Fair Trade.

I: From what background are those people, from the tourism background, you mean?

II: No, nothing about tourism, just general people in Thailand. Obviously people would tell you they think that being fair was a good idea, but actually creating a set of principles around it; or that discrimination is not a good idea or that looking after the environment is what we want to do... all these various aspects of social development are happening in different fields, but putting it all together as a means or code by which to do trade is not something which is in concept here. Or even the concept of social enterprises, whereby you can actually do a business in order create social development as its first priority. This is also something which is a bit strange to people here. But when we are talking about tourism, are we talking about foreigner coming to Thailand...?

I: Yes, I am talking about inbound tourism.

II: So, what the Thai population think is really irrelevant. It is more a matter whether or not Fair Trade principles are being offered for your inbound people, is that right?

I: Well, there is a lot of information on your website which already answers my questions. I found it just interesting to understand your business philosophy. So, on your website it says that a lot of your business comes from the consumer interest, so people were actually requesting it?

II: Yes. Well, people were requesting to go and visit where the products were made.

I: And they were not really aware that this is about Fair Trade?

II: No, not necessarily. We are actually working with some trade organizations in Europe and North America who organize or want to organize tours where producers are working. So there will be people coming who already know about Fair Trade and would like to see some Fair Trade in action, see for themselves what it actually means by when you say Fair Trade. Where is the product coming from? What is it made of? At the same time if you actually conduct your tour, you should be doing so in a responsible manner which follows Fair Trade principles, which, in other words, empowers the people you are visiting.

I: And which principles are you following?

II: Well, if you look at the International Fair Trade principles, we like to try to follow those because we belong to the World Fair Trade Organization. And the other ones who develop this list of... there is also a group of the Fair Trade labeling people, that is all about products. But not many people have actually worked on Fair Trade in services. And tourism is a service and not a physical product. It is a service which is created or operated, and we believe there should be certain guidelines under which these services should be operated. And one of them is, that you should not damage the environment, you should not damage local culture, you should not damage various things... But actually on

the contrary you should support those things. Tourism should actually just not do harm but it perhaps should be a force for good, so that you can help to support culture. And you can help to support the preservation of the environment, because you want to see things remain as they are and not destroy them, okay? [smiling] So, in many ways tourism can be an agent to actually improve these things, rather than being an agent that comes in and damages them. So, [...] carbon-neutral or whatever it is, you sort of neither harming nor gaining. I think that you could actually go to the state of actually gaining, so that tourism has actually something improved. This is very much how we do our company in a way, because *Company 7* is not only marketing or giving them an income, it is helping to preserve old traditions and skills, so old traditional craft, which has been very very fast lost. If we did not create a market for it, they would not survive.

I: So, you basically create those tours to preserve the culture, but it is not that you create those tours for customer demand? It is your own philosophy?

II: We got to be very honest about this. We are going to show the customers how things really are. We are not going to start building villages, like the Tourism Authority does in Thailand, for example the floating market, creating it out of nothing and saying it is traditional, while it is actually just some sort of museum. We are not going to turn villages into museums. The world moves on as it does, and if you want to see how the world really is... But the point about tourism is that for most people tourism really is a recreational thing. They have been working very hard in their cold climates, so they looking for something warm and nice to get away with and get their brains some rest. They are no interested in culture..., well they are maybe, but that is not the reason that they are coming on a holiday. Okay, that is fine, you can provide that. But there are also people who would like to travel, who wish to learn about the way things are. So, they may want to do a bit of both. So maybe you come to a holiday in Thailand and you end up in Phuket, Chiang Mai or Ko Samui but that is not the real Thailand. These are the artificial places that are set up for tourism and even in Bangkok tourists just stay in one little area. I live in Bangkok and I guarantee not to see a foreigner from the beginning of the day till the end, because foreigner never go into my part of Bangkok. But actually there is the real part of Thailand going on, genuine people, genuine lives. And a lot of people want to see that genuine thing. So, the concept basically was: Yes, we could create some kind of tourism which allows people to open their eyes to different cultures. The culture we have a unique link with these communities that make crafts. When we visit them we are guests of the village and they are looking forwards to our visit, to host our visit. So, when somebody comes on one of our tours the gets a welcome to our village, a genuine welcome by our people. I mean anybody could travel up to the North East and visit a village. But people do not know who you are. There is no link, no bond between the two sides...

I: So, you provide that link?

II: Yes, we can provide that.

I: Okay. So sustainable tourism and CSR are two terms that have become really fashionable for companies...

II:... but you don't know what they actually mean...

I:...exactly. So I was wondering how you understand them. I mean from what you just said, it is probably your philosophy and the way you understand CSR...

II: Yeah, so I understand CSR as the way an ordinary type of business becomes more aware of its environment and the communities around it; and feels that it has a responsibility to play its part in society. But the business itself is not necessarily socially focused because it has another objective, which is different from a social enterprise because it is set up in the first place to support... So, when you actually say CSR in tourism, are you talking about an ordinary mainstream tourist company that may organize holidays to Phuket which may have a CSR element to it?

I: Well, I am talking about both. I know that Phu Phiang is a social enterprise and that its whole purpose is actually to be socially responsible. And then I am talking about the others which are doing for example community-based tourism besides their normal products.

II: Yes, I think it is a wonderful idea. And it is certainly something which *Mr. x*, who you have met, has been working very hard on and supported very much, but I also know that here have been a lot of disappointments. And one of the disappointments basically is, that perhaps the tour companies, the small ones, have not given enough time to build up a trust which is needed between an operator that can provide this sort of community-based tourism. And perhaps the recognition of setting up the structure for good community-based tourism takes a lot of work and a lot of time and a lot of effort. There has to be somebody with a lot of patience to work on it. Because it is an add-on, it is not a priority for these companies necessarily. So perhaps they think, oh yeah this is great, we can just add that on...

I: For what kind of purposes?

II: For probably marketing purposes, to give them a better face...But I think it has got to mean more than that!

I: And those companies, they are just not able to...

II: Well, the companies, I mean, they are just not part of the culture. They are sort of usually foreign owned and they want to make money from tourism. So, perhaps... I don't know, I am probably being very unkind... [smiling].

I: So, but do you think that this whole movement towards sustainable tourism of other companies has changed your business operations? Does it make things harder, to like to live up to your philosophy?

II: It does in the sense that... unless we can set some standards which are recognized, people will come in and do, what I would call a 'war to the down-version'. In other words, make it appear as if it is, but actually just a little bit, but not really, in order to make it cheaper. So, the customer does not really know by going to this particular offer, whether it is genuine or not, or what resources have been used for. Which means, if you offer a genuine thing, is going to be costly. It will sell, but other companies will offer it at half the price...Yes, and therefore we find it difficult to sell our product, because it is too expensive. They could go through whole Thailand for half the price.

I: But are you targeting more the upscale market?

II: Well, we cannot target the mainstream market. There has been some suggestion that we ought to be add-ons to that, but I think it is very difficult. So I think in some respect we need to market ourselves as a separate entity, almost not even tourism, but more a travel-educational experience thing, rather than calling ourselves tourism. Because tourism is lying on beaches, going to bar, whereas this is something different. So, maybe we ought to be just ending ourselves and getting to know the world, getting to know the people and blab la bal... It is not really a holiday, it is more of a educational experience.

I: Okay, but I saw on your website that you are also doing just Bangkok tours, is that correct?

II: Well, you know, when we did the website, it is a bit out of date by now... because it has been a bit calm recently... So one of the tasks is that I can get rid of *Company 7* out of my hands, so that I am able to more develop this, but we felt at one stage that we might have the opportunity to offer people a little bit if they only came for a short period of time; in the way of offering an alternative look at Bangkok. After all it is a huge city and many people just end up in two or three places, where all the other tourists are. But there are a lot of other interesting places, which tourist have never heard of and this makes it something a little different. But may if people come to Thailand, they just want to see what everybody else has seen and that's enough, so that's fair enough... I think there are also possibilities on us of doing educational experiences for groups of young people or children. To be honest, I rather do out in the country, than in Bangkok. But anyway it is a concept which we have already proven to turn into a proper business.

I: And since when are you doing this?

II: Well, my wife and I we have been running tours of people interested in craft, ever since we did our company, actually even before that. So we used to take people into villages and that sort of thing. But we started as a company; my daughter actually started the company in 2004/2005. And we sort of did with quite a lot of staff, so we became quite a sort small business till about three years ago, when political

things started to be difficult. And then we had some problems with ThaiCraft, so we had to concentrate more on that, that sort of thing... Because *Company 7* is an organization without an infrastructure. We can organize things, if it happens, but if it does not happen, we don't have anything, you know, we don't own infrastructure, we don't own hotels, buses...

I: So, but do you have guides or how does a tour work?

II: Well, we are quite small and therefore, between us, my daughter, my wife... we have done most of the guiding. We had two of our staff from ThaiCraft guiding, that sort of thing, who know the villages well... It is a quite closed thing. We don't go out and hire guide from outside and take somebody around the Grand Palace or something... We might find a knowledgeable person to do that. People like the feel to go around with people who know...

I: And, because you are on the TEATA website, did you take part in that CSR-MAP project?

II: Well, we didn't too much... We did take part in the CSR-MAP project, yes we did...

I: And what do you think about it?

II: Well it was good, except from they bringing in... I didn't think they were linking up with the outside agents, you know, the inbound agents together with the local enterprises, companies like us was not easy. But I think there is a lot that could be done. As I said, if we could do a different kind of marketing for Thailand-based organizations... But, you know, Thailand-based organizations are not really great business people nor socially minded. So, they do not quite know how to get out and reach out to the market. It is difficult, because... okay, we have got this preposition and I am here in Thailand. So, how do we find somebody in Germany interested in coming on a tour like ours. Maybe now, as the Intern has developed and become more mature, we could actually start selling things directly on the market. But in the past, we were thinking: Something like such a big investment as a trip to Thailand for three weeks, people might want something a little more secure than linking on to some unknown person on the Internet [*smiling*], you know what I mean... They would rather work through some kind of known organization in their own country. But then we also think, one of the ways we could work is through sort of interest groups in your countries. Maybe there is a group in your country interested in crafts, so all kinds of crafts. You know: 'we are all potters, we do it as a hobby, we would love to visit potteries in Thailand and see all the ways in which it is done there, the techniques and things...' So, we could actually organize specialist holidays, whereby people would come and visit a certain number of potteries around the country and pass some other places which might fit in as well, cultural things... So, you know, there is new ways and different ways in which we should do marketing.

I: So I am nearly done, I do not want to steal too much of your time, but the TEATA-principles do they influence your business?

II: Well, we joined TEATA but we have not been very active in TEATA. But we joined them because... Peter persuaded us we should [*smiling*], no because we think it will be helpful and gives us some sort of strength behind people who are sort of like-minded and have the same philosophy about the kind of business we do, rather than working completely on our own. But I think we should have played more of an active role, and I think we will perhaps in the future. [...] We were just contacted by CBI which is the Dutch organization that helps people in developing countries with new markets. So, they took us to this exhibition. It was interesting...

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.8 Company 8

III: So, go ahead...

II: Yeah, so what you need is information about how we are doing business and responsible tourism, right?

I: Right. And about the motivations and why are you doing this kind of thing.

III: Why do you do good things? Because, we are good people... [*laughing*]

IV: And because it is good for the PR of a company... [*laughing*]

I: So, there are different views about it?

II: For me, I did not start with doing this kind of thing. I started since I was a student, because I worked in a sort of environmental club, trying to improve the environment and the nature, and also acting against any project or initiative that destroyed the nature that is how I started... But, I would say, in terms of business there are many reasons. I don't think it is a shame to say that, but it is also kind of a marketing tool, but it is not the main reason. It is one reason; it is maybe on the second or third point. The first thing is that we saw a lot of problems occurring in tourism in my 23 years of business. So when we talk about any place that they want to promote, maybe within one month or one year, it became damaged. And when I found some kind of project which is good, some kind of business which just matched to our own concept, I say this is what I am looking for. Because in business during the past 20 years we dealt a lot with mass tourism, which is actually Thailand's image. And when you tried to offer something different, and this is not now but in the past, we were told: Oh, you should go to the school. You should offer these things to school, not to tour operators. I remember, when I had my first project. I had a 3-page folder about the waterfall and water rafting and information about the product/project. So, I went to Germany and people told me: You should offer to the school or students, they are maybe good for your program. And I said: No, but I want to offer it to tour operators. And until now I sold that tour maybe twice... So, the market is not ready for that...

I: Not, yet?

II: At that time, no. And not even now... I mean, now it is getting better, but still... But I think if you do the right thing it is just one leg, we still have to rely on mass tourism because this is still our income. But on the other side, we have another leg that we also try to develop to do anything that we think that is good, because it is our country! It is good for our country and for our business in the long term. That is because of sustainability. Because if we saw Pattaya 10 years ago... people moved away, we saw the movement. The tour operators abroad do not care what happens to your country. When it is damaged, it is damaged and they go to Mallorca or... they have anywhere to go! So they don't care what happens in Thailand. But we will be here, so we have to protect our own resources and protect our business. This is what our business is about. And again, if we are not recognized, that we are do good things, we don't have good customers to come here, because they are looking for these people also. That is why we have to develop and make it more, and try to gather people together to make it. If you do it as one person, nobody will see. But if you do it as an association or you work together, you have more power to push things. But again, I have to say, that I am not very much happy about the situation today. What we have done with a lot of effort... I feel that very few people in our country appreciate it, because it is not fast enough.

I: You mean the business people?

II: Yes, yes. But again, for us, we are already half way, so we continue doing this! It does not matter if we can sell or not, but our business can rely on the normal business we have and on the other hand I try to offer different things and good things for the people.

I: So, you basically have on the one hand eco-tourism products or environmentally/socially-friendly products, like CBT-I...

II: I mean the products are environmentally-friendly anyway. But the CSR Green Route is something very special...

I: From the CSR-MAP Project, right?

II: Yes, but in generally we try also to offer anything that is environmentally-friendly. In the office, we also started three years ago to work paperless. My files are not increasing anymore, already for two years. And all the paper has to be used two-sided and we agreed in the office to not buy food from outside with film. There are many small things that we are trying to do in our organization. Save lights, save water and whatever... And whenever we do a good thing we try to promote it, but as I said it is not that easy.

I: And would say since the project, I believe the project what finished last year...

II: Yes, in August. 18 months we did it. I think it is good because it is the way. We learned a lot of from it. We have done our research, we learned from the market side... Taking the example of my waterfall, I did not know which market I needed and came back with a big disappointment... Now, we researched and have worked together, and one thing which is really important, we have more people on the same line, and that is nice! We are not alone, so that gives us more strength and motivation to continue. We found the people to would like work with us and who are interested. If they are not interested, give them two years time...

[*interruption, V comes in*]

III: I mean, there are lots of different tourism businesses in Thailand, right? But they are all doing good things. Some of these businesses are more keeping up-to-date or they are more interested in like discourse and discussion about different formal theories like CSR or sustainable tourism or responsible tourism. Some of them are more directly linked to the big European tour operators and stuff like that who are very kind of formalizing these systems. So if you speak to an International hotel chain like Marriot or Sheraton or a Thai company like Amari, they tend to communicate in the same way that you are communicating. You know, I mean looking at CSR, looking at integrative management and all these kinds of things, but there are lots and lots of other tour operators who are basically doing various good things for the environment and the local society. And, basically at that moment, these people are sort of using CSR as a common platform to work on it and exchange ideas. It is kind of a social space, I mean if you ask 50 different tourism suppliers, who are trying to do something good, big hotels, small hotels, big tour operators, small tour operators, organic restaurants... if you talk to them you will be able to find a lot of common ground. But if you ask them, how they understood CSR they probably have a completely or fairly different understanding. Or they might know more about another idea, like eco-tourism or responsible tourism.

II: Actually we do not stick to the words to much. We stick to what we are doing, because sometimes you stick to the words and people do not even know what it means.

III: I am sure we have lots of people. You will always have people fighting each other and telling each other what it means and stuff.

I: Well, but that is great because that is exactly what I am researching, where small size tour operators are standing. And what you said...

III: At the moment, the exact point where small tour operators standing in terms of CSR... I don't know if you agree [*looking at the others*]... but small tour operators do not really know what CSR actually is in terms how European people or academic people would define it, but the heard of CSR. They know that is has something to do with the environment and the society, and maybe with good management. Some SMEs would know that is something with management, so they are kind of interested. The other thing in Thailand is, that there is a certain number of people, who feel that CSR is like green washing, you know. It is a word used by big corporations, to make big companies look good and responsible and like real green or eco-tourism... But even that word is kind of... So, there is that. I think one thing that we are trying at the moment is to learn from CSR.

I: Okay. So, are you using the principles that were set up with the CSR-MAP Project? Is that what you are working towards to?

III: The project developed standards, okay? And the standards were based on something called Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria were developed by comparing over 200 other eco-labels and sustainability systems. And it includes a lot of things which are principles being incorporated into CSR. And the different suppliers looked at the Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) and said, this is what we are feeling comfortable to commit to. And feeling comfortable to commit to is an advanced criterion, as a management criterion...

I: So, the criteria are basically your guideline for your CSR-activities?

II: Yes, pretty much. This is what we are doing.

I: And from the perspective of a tour operator, what would you say are typical CSR-activities?

II: I mean the GSTC make quite clear what you have to care about, there are four criteria, it is very easy to understand: your care about the environment, you care about culture and heritage, you care about socio-economy of the communities, and also you care about the management. Plus the service, that is the one we have more. And you cannot go out of these four pillars.

I: Okay, but how would you describe your role in the whole sustainable tourism development?

III: The project was led by a Tour Operator Association, okay? TEATAL, Green Leaf Foundation and CBT-I and basically the core of what it was educating the suppliers so that they understood more about sustainable tourism and what it was and to develop some minimum standards. And the second thing is to create these green routes, which were a mixture of different suppliers in different parts of Thailand. And at the end of the project now, where everybody was thinking, and what is next? This is the point where they were at. I mean the reality is that some of the suppliers that were involved in creating the standards are at the level of the minimum standards, but some of them are not. And some of them will not be able to be at this level without having more training or maybe having a soft loan to buy things. And in terms of the routes, we try to promote them to the market, right? But so far the Europeans still have not... I mean, we had fantastic feedback for the FAM-Trip that we did last year. And it kind of showed us that the products are good-quality products, but the number of tour operator getting back to us is quite low... So, this is the point where we at right now. It is like, how to work effectively with the market side, how the market also, because it so competitive here, how can the market add value to the product to put the market in. The trend is, we want the best thing at the lowest price and sustainable. And I mean there is a limit. We are not talking about price and quality, like it is a ratio as well. If you want a really low price then you compromise about the quality at a certain point. So, at that point it is not just saying to the suppliers that we want cheaper products. If you are more efficient you can save some money... it works in some cases but not in all cases. Imagine, you are in a community where the people would be paid 20 Baht per night for a homestay and then you decide, well we are going to use CTB because CBT is fairer priced. Even if you only pay half of what the community members are asking for in terms of what they think is a fair price, it is still about three times more expensive than the market value, so it is not cheaper. So, there is a happy myth in Europe which is based on hotels that CSR will always eventually lead to saving money. And this is the way they are pushing it, the business argument: CSR will save you money! CSR will save you money if you are turning off lights, turning off tabs, maybe improving waste management. But it will definitely not save you money necessarily, if you pay exploited community members more or a fair price. And it may not save you money, if you are paying your own employees more. You may keep your employees longer and have more quality work force, but it might not necessarily be cheaper. But in Thailand the social and cultural side is very very important and it is part of the strength of the tourism product in Thailand as well. It is not pure nature like in Malaysia, it is much more half and half weight. When we are talking about really putting CSR or responsible tourism into practice, it would necessitate people helping us to market more expensive products. Would you agree with that? [*II,IV,V nodding*]

I: Okay, and do you perceive CSR or sustainable tourism as a competitive advantage for the business?

III: Quality is always a competitive advantage, like through word of mouth. Like or any of these guys, they have a really good quality product which is really fun and also sustainable and then it will become a competitive advantage because of word of mouth and recommendations. But at the market end it is very difficult because everybody is promoting it in exactly the same way. You can write anything that you want in a brochure, take a nice picture... One of the big problems is that people talk a lot about market, creating awareness and be in the market for responsible tourism driven by market demand. It is a good idea and it can work to a certain point, but we have to accept that some of the issues that we are dealing with are just really technical. I mean, the tourists do not know, they do not understand, they cannot see the difference. Even if you talk to a middle-aged family in the Netherland or the UK and ask them what are the differences between a village visit

and a really well organized CBT visit with meetings and participation... they would not have a clue. How do we encourage people who are quite well informed, quite interested to get them to understand...

II: It is quite difficult... I told this story to one of my partners in Germany this year at the ITB. I tried to convince him to promote... and he said: Supi, what you told me in two hours is very nice, I like it very much. But how can I put everything you told me in one picture of my program [laughing]. Because they cannot spend five pages of the catalogue to explain about the program, about sustainability... They have half a page maybe for a 3-day-tour. How can you make people know?

III: This is really interesting.

II: It is very interesting. I said, oops I have to go back and think about it... [laughing]

IV: We were talking sometimes about giving the stars for eco-tours, like 1,2,3,4 or 5 stars. So the products with the stars are qualified to guarantee that the package is certified for the better service and also for CSR. So, I think this is one advantage. Instead of one product per half a page, you just get branding, recognizable, so that people will accept it and are willing to pay higher price for the branded products.

III: I agree with you. The only point right now, like today, or the question is... part of the answer is... you have some certification system or some kind of labeling... I mean, yeah that is true, otherwise how do people know? I cannot remember, but somebody said to me once how much it costs tour operators to just have half page in the brochure. When they multiply it by 300000 for one fair and ten fairs a year... I mean it is just a maximum amount of money. You just add four sentences and it is like thousands of dollars. The problem is that there are now lots of certification systems. One thing that we have seen is that there is kind of a divide somewhere of certifications systems in the country, in the destination. They provide better service for the suppliers because they are located in the country, they speak the same language and understand the culture. And then, the certification systems which are located in the source country, they provide more market power. So the question is, is it possible to work together to have some kind of common system which starts at the market goes through...from supplier to demand. Basically, we can actually compare directly, so this is what we are talking about today...

I: So, this is basically where it is all heading to, that you actually want certification?

III: It is one way.

I: So, you are providing products for the big European suppliers, but do you also have independent travelers who come here and book a tour and is not that a different story, addressing them?

II: Yes, you mean the customer side, right? There are people who are interested in this kind of tour and that is what we are doing right now, trying to catch the right partners. That is what we are doing, but again, it takes time and we also have to prove to them that this is another way also. Because these people, they know what they want and we have to prove that our product is what they want. And this is why we are trying to organize these FAM-Trips. They are coming to us and tell us, okay this is what we want or give us comments

I: So you are still testing what they actually expect?

II: Not really testing. We are doing the marketing now, but we are inviting the people to come to experience the trip in order to see... On the one hand we want to market the product, but they also have the right to say, okay you should adjust this, it is kind of a co-operation. To offer these tours is not one-way, it is a two-ways and all stakeholders together, because it is not only our responsibility but also the one of the partners who understand it.

I: And how do you interact with your stakeholders, for example with the communities?

III: It depends. I mean there is CBT-I, so if the tour operators work with CBT-I it is one way that they can help. The CBT-network, which is at the moment under construction, relies on a certain amount of volume. If a certain numbers of tour operators work with the communities that are in the network, than the network can sustain itself. At the moment there are lots of thing which are trying out and that have not really been done before.

II: Yes, it is new. The market is new, so it takes time until we can adjust them to the right. I would say we are about 30 %, but another 20% we have to adjust.

III: Another things, that is important is that there are two levels. There is the really, really great and proper sustainable and responsible tourism products... If it is that kind of product we can look at the supply chain, we can look at the tour operators and we can also go directly to independent travelers. So that is one side, but the other side is, when you are talking about CSR especially, you are talking about how to make mass tourism better. I mean, not only how to sell real sustainable tourism but CSR also, so how are they going to improve the quality of the ordinary mass tourism. So, that is really B2B stuff. And what the people that we are working with in Europe believe is that if the European tour operator associations half push and half invite their members to actively select sustainable suppliers. For example, TUI said that in about 2015 50% of the hotels that they are selling their guests to have to be certified green hotels. So, this means that if they are able to it to do it, at a certain point, that company is monitoring and limiting itself, saying, we commit to do this. So that commitment creates a new market, creates a better market for green hotels. And then, at least inside Thailand, it becomes about identifying green hotels, training hotel owners to become more green. The idea is that this has a kind of a big impact on the whole sector.

I: If you say, CSR or sustainable tourism is about changing mass tourism, what power...

III: I think to be honest, CSR and the way people use it and speak about, most of all is more about changing mass tourism. When we are talking about specialist tourism we are using terms like eco-tourism, responsible tourism, that kind of thing... I mean 'corporate' means big, right... But CSR has become so well-known and so much used, that it is kind of the space for people to come in and learn.

I: And do you think, as a small size company, that you have some impact or power to work towards better tourism?

V: In terms of marketing, we do both, the B2B and B2C... But B2C is the more powerful power, it is better to create the demand from the consumer. So that they can push the travel agent and really say, okay we need this type of product and if they do not know, they are trying to find... I think in terms of marketing B2B and B2C should go together, but I think B2C is more powerful.

I: But do you think you create the market? Or is the market already there and you have to try to connect to the market?

III: It is both. Social movements in the media, trends and the Internet have a massive influence on people.

II: If you can promote your website in the high ranking, I think it is good.

III: The supply chain is really slow, it is really slow and really risk-averse. A lot of people in middle management jobs, who are product managers, so they are not the owners of the companies... They know that the way to keep their job is just to go for good quality and cheap. If you speak to the people that are overseas, the owner of the companies, they want to push them, they want to do something that is difficult and they want to make it happen. But most of the time, within the segment of the middle management people, they would not choose to use a more expensive better quality product because they can sell what they already got... I mean, no always but often it is like that. So, this is the way I am thinking now, what we have to do next is to go to the very very top of these companies in Europe, speaking to the CEOs and saying, okay enough talking about sustainable tourism, you have to do it! You have to make a commitment... You are the director of your company, you know that there is risk involved in this, so you have to make a commitment basically and just sort of pushing it into action... which I think it is starting to happen. What was said about independent travelers... I totally agree. Because the supply chain is so slow, sometimes you don't have enough opportunity to actually show how good the products are because you don't sell them. You know what I mean, you create these amazing products and then you wait and wait and wait... and only a couple of people buy them. So, what you don't have, you don't have feedback, which says: Look, the customers love it. So you have to go for the independent travelers, showing... Same for the tour operators... If you say you want sustainable tourism, this sustainable tourism and it get great feedback as well... And actually the limitation is with you, not necessarily with the supply side. The limitation is you, you are vivid to the market, your limitation in being able to buy good quality products...

II: Usually I think the market needs sustainable tourism, but they don't want to increase the price. They want sustainable products but cheap and this is actually not possible.

III: I am not even sure if... I mean it is competitive at every point in the supply chain, I think we need something new. I mean it is possible that these people cannot choose our products. I mean the environment is just so competitive. If they do chose our products, than one of their competitors does not chose the product and chooses something cheaper... So we have to find something which is really really powerful, talking about... [laughing]

I: One last question... The government is putting much effort in promoting sustainable tourism and CSR at the moment, does that influence your business?

II: The policies are true, but the action...no. If they want to promote green tourism they produce a book about it and that is it and they invite some media to come and see it...

III: The thing is that they are system challenges to this. If you look at tourism in Kazakhstan or Laos, these are countries that have got a very new, green tourism industry, where it is relatively easy to promote interesting and sustainable products, because there is not so much competition. But Thailand has been competing hard for 20/25 years.

II: It is also okay, because at least they have this policy announced. We also can get some sort of support from the government in terms of marketing or providing us with some channels in terms of export or the introduction of green projects or whatever is done. This is the co-operation. We appreciate that. I mean, sorry but sometimes I am too straight, but you have to work hard to get it. So, we worked hard and got it and the standards that we have developed in the CSR-MAP Project have been taken into consideration to be lived up to national standards in the next few years.

I: For any type of tourism business?

II: Yes, for the country. This is the government support, they appreciate what we have done, so we work together in a way. But it is not that they made us do it... they just started, I mean luckily they started two or three years, which is okay, I mean it is good.

V: The picture is good, but something behind the picture...

III: If you have a really good idea, the positive thing is that the government, the eco-tourism and sustainable tourism policy, right... so if you have a good idea, suggest it to them and if you succeed, it means that the government succeeds as well, because it is also their policy. So, it is better than in the past. In the past nobody took care of it.

I: Well, thanks so much. That was really interesting. Could you formulate a final statement or something like that, how the future regarding CSR or sustainable tourism will look like here in Thailand?

II: Well, we have done the work, we have done studies, we have learned... we have now some products to introduce and try to put into the market. We got some customers who are interested to support me, but they have to understand first. The work for us is to train the people and teach them what it is all about. And this takes time. In generally, new things, they don't have to be green, but new products in tourism take 2-3 years to be introduced to the market, especially in B2B. B2C tends to be faster. You have to make people understand, you have to explain to your partners what it is all about... that is what we are doing, but we are positive! Because I believe it is the right way, it does not matter what the others say.

V: And we try to expand the impact.

III: The future of tourism is that basically... two things are going to happen. The first thing is that it is getting more and more competitive. The Internet is making it... And I mean the tour operators will add more and more value, because it is easier to use other marketing channels, but at the same time the necessity to care about sustainable development is getting more and more obvious, because we are going to see the ice caps melt and all these things... So, the urgent necessity to support sustainable development is able to motivate enough people to go on holiday maybe once, instead of three times a year.

I: Okay, well I think that was basically it. Thanks a lot for your time and effort, it is highly appreciated...

A.4.9 Company 9

I: Als erstes würde ich gerne wissen, wie ihr CSR in eurer Firma versteht?

II: Bezüglich des Begriffes CSR wissen viele hier einfach nicht sofort was damit gemeint ist. Also, wenn man jetzt eine Umfrage machen würde und fragt: „Was bedeutet CSR für dich?“, dann würden viele einfach nicht wissen was gemeint ist. Die Unterschiede zwischen Sustainable Tourism and CSR sind nicht so präsent, wie wir es zum Beispiel in der Definition im wissenschaftlichen Sinne haben. Aber sie machen halt wahnsinnig viel, aber es ist auch nicht zertifiziert und das ist das Problem. Tour Cert und ähnliche Beispiele aus Europa – ich weiß gar nicht ob es die in Thailand generell gibt. Wenn du beispielsweise fragst, wie viel ist euer Energieverbrauch im Office... das wird dir niemand berechnen können, weil an die Daten niemand rankommt und man das aber braucht um diese ganze Zertifizierung zu machen. Also nicht, dass sich das nur auf die Produkte bezieht sonder auch generell auf die internen Sachen. CSR bezieht sich ja auf das Office, auf den Supply Chain, also nicht nur auf die Produkte...

I: Ja, aber was mir aufgefallen ist, dass hier doch der Fokus stark auf die Produkte gelegt wird...

II: Ja genau das ist bei *Company 9* auch so. Da wird schon darauf geachtet, dass die Supplier local Supplier sind. Was ich so mitgekriegt habe, die Leute die als Produkt Manager bei uns arbeiten, die sind halt auch echt engagiert, die gucken sich die Projekte persönlich an. Morgen gehe ich mit unserer Produktmanagerin los, wir gucken uns einen Elephant Conservation Temple an und solche Sachen werden dann auch mit in die Produkt eingebunden. Und das ist halt was wir machen.

I: Und hat das ganze so angefangen, also war das ursprünglich ein normaler Tour Operator der dann erst mit Sustainability/CSR angefangen hat oder begann das von Anfang an?

II: Also, soweit ich das sehe haben wir schon sehr früh damit angefangen. Aber ohne es direkt zu nennen, also ohne zu sagen wir machen Sustainable Tourism oder CSR, also bevor das so gehypet wurde - dieses „zurück geben“ zur Gesellschaft. Die meisten von den Expats, die in der Firma arbeiten, die leben halt hier, die haben teilweise Thai Familien, sind verheiratet und haben deswegen eine gewisse Beziehung zu dem Land und damit auch der Verantwortung.

I: Und wann hat das dann mit der Foundation angefangen?

II: Die Foundation gab es theoretisch schon länger. Aber als ich herkam war ich schon noch sehr mit dem Aufbau der Foundation beschäftigt. Marketing war ein sehr großer Teil, aber halt auch interne Strukturen, sprich wie es organisiert wird, der legale Registrierungsprozess... da sind wir halt mittendrin noch. Und dann hab ich angefangen mit den Charity Projekten Kooperation aufzubauen und rauszufinden was die sich vorstellen könnten und das halt alles ein bisschen zu formalisieren.

I: Und wie hat ihr die ausgesucht? Richtet sich das danach was der Kunde wünscht oder wie funktioniert das?

II: Also, auf der Website ist eine Auswahl unserer Projekte. Und das sind Projekte, die wir auch schon über Exotissimo unterstützt haben. Die waren entweder mit in dem Programm enthalten oder es gibt auch einmal im Jahr ein freiwillig organisiertes Event auf dem Mitarbeiter Geld sammeln und dieses dann für ein bestimmtes Projekt spenden. Also wir hatten dann schon irgendwie Kontakt mit den Projekten vorher und mussten halt irgendwie anfangen. Und dann dachten wir uns, ja die kennen wir so ein bisschen, und haben diese dann erstmal für die Foundation ausgewählt. Ich hab dann auch noch ein paar Guidelines gemacht, also nach welchen Kriterien man solche Projekte auswählen

sollte. Und einmal im Jahr muss sich halt das Komitee von der Foundation treffen und da wird halt entschieden wie dieser Fund aufgeteilt wird. Und da gibt es dann auch nochmal die Möglichkeit andere Projekte einzubringen. Und dann entscheidet das Komitee mehrheitlich was es unterstützen will.

I: Und gibt es bestimmte Richtungen in die eure Projekte gehen?

II: Es ist ziemlich offen. Es ist alles dabei und es gibt verschiedene Arten von Unterstützung: finanziell, auf Marketing-Basis oder es wird auch viel von *Company 9* selbst unterstützt, dadurch, dass die Projekte Teil der Touren sein können. Es gibt halt einige Touren die solche Projekte besuchen und im Tourpreis ist dann schon ein Anteil als Donation mit drin.

I: Und wie animiert ihr die Leute zu spenden?

II: Das läuft alles über Marketing. Natürlich versuchen wir diese Agents mit denen wir arbeiten zum Spenden ranzukriegen. Momentan ist es ja so, dass wir noch relativ neu sind als wirkliche Foundation. Deswegen sind es nicht viele externe Leute die spenden, sondern schon die Leute und Tour Companies, die wir kennen. Es ist aber schon so geplant, dass Leute später einfach die Projekte unterstützen. Aber da muss halt noch wesentlich mehr Marketing und Fundraising gemacht werden.

I: Und könntest du sagen, was die Haupt-„Issues“ sind, die ihr ansprechen wollt?

II: Wie gesagt, ich will es schon recht breitgefächert halten. Wir wollen uns jetzt beispielsweise nicht nur auf social Issues fokussieren. Wir sind in Asien und da gibt es so viele verschiedene Probleme und dementsprechend viele Projekte, dass wir uns da nicht festlegen wollen.

I: Und wie funktioniert die Zusammenarbeit genau? Gibt es einen Dialog?

II: Also wir fragen da schon nach wie es aussieht, ob sie Unterstützung wollen und in welcher Form und wie wir das dann machen könnten, je nachdem was für Resources wir halt auch haben. Beispielsweise jetzt, im ersten Jahr, wird halt noch nicht so viel da sein was wir verteilen können. Wir wollen dann natürlich im Vorhinein auch nicht zu viel versprechen. Die erwarten ja dann auch was von uns und da müssen wir dann schon realistisch bleiben.

I: Okay. Und denkst du dass diese Foundation oder eure Aktivitäten auch einen Shared Value für die Firma haben?

II: Ja, ich hab auch schon drüber nachgedacht, ob dieser Image- oder Market-Effekt gegeben ist... Und eigentlich ist es ja auch so, dass sowas ganz oft aus Marketinggründen gemacht wird, aber das Ding ist einfach, dass wir damit bei uns ja nicht den Großteil des Geldes machen. Wir wollen auch gar nicht zu sehr in die Richtung, dass wir nur Nischenprodukte anbieten. Wir haben auch viele MICE-Gruppen, wahnsinnig große und eher „upscale“. Und um jetzt auf deine Frage zurück zu kommen, also wenn es jetzt um den reinen Profit geht, glaube ich nicht, dass CSR groß etwas dazu beiträgt.

I: Also ist der eigentliche Hauptgrund schon eine innere Überzeugung aus der heraus ihr CSR macht?

II: Ja, das würde ich schon sagen. Also wenn ich mir unsere Manager so angucke, ist es halt schon so, dass unser Managing Director mit dem Fahrrad durch die Gegend fährt... Es ist denke ich schon so, dass die Leute wirklich etwas bewirken wollen. Und die leben halt hier in Thailand, haben hier Familie, Freunde... Und wenn man jetzt auch so lange hier ist wie *Company 9*, seit 1993 dann sieht man halt auch wie sich das hier alles entwickelt hat, und es hat sich nicht alles zum Positiven entwickelt! Und deswegen ist den Leuten hier schon sehr bewusst, dass das die Grundlage für alles ist. Wenn du also den Nationalpark nicht schützt, dann komm auch irgendwann Niemand mehr hier her!

I: Um nochmal bezüglich des CSR-Begriffs zu fragen, du meinst also...

II: Ja ich weiß auch nicht wie ich das richtig erklären kann. Ich glaube einfach es ist recht schwierig diese wissenschaftliche Definition durchzusetzen. Die haben zwar Training und alle irgendwelche T-Shirt auf den steht „I am sustainable“, aber ich glaube wenn du hier wirklich nach einer Definition fragst, kriegst du einfach nicht die Antwort die du erwarten wirst. Ich selbst war auch sehr überrascht... Als ich hier angekommen bin und 2-3 Wochen da war, wurde ich gleich gefragt, ob ich mitkommen will auf einen Charity-Trip. Da hat halt kein Manager gesagt, das wir das machen müssen, sonder es ist einfach jeder von sich aus mitgekommen.

I: Okay. Um Sustainability gab oder gibt es ja auch einen ziemlichen Hype im Tourismus. Hat das in irgendeiner Weise einen Einfluss auf die Einstellung der Firma gehabt. Hieß es beispielsweise, dass man sich jetzt noch stärker engagieren müsste, um glaubhaft zu bleiben, gerade im Rahmen dieser ganzen „Greenwashing-Bewegung“? Macht es das irgendwie schwieriger für eure Firma?

II: Ich glaube, es macht es in dem Sinne schwieriger, weil du aufpassen musst, wie du Marketing betreibst, wie du es kommunizierst... Weil ja quasi alle kommunizieren, wie sie es machen, aber dann halt doch nicht 100%-ig dahinter stehen. Das einzige was man halt wirklich machen kann, ist es so transparent wie möglich zu halten: Annual Reports, so dass halt alle Sachen offen gelegt werden. Was wir mit der Foundation überleg hatten ist, dass es ja auch einfach sehr schwierig ist einen Annual Report zusammenzustellen, aber wir wollen das halt jetzt auch auf die Website stellen, weil ich glaube nur allein dadurch kann man sich schon ein Bisschen beweisen und von den Anderen absetzen. Schwierig, auf jeden Fall... Für den Kunden ist es halt of schwierig zu unterscheiden, ob das jetzt wirklich was zu sagen hat oder nicht.

I: Und merkt ihr ob es mehr und mehr Customer gibt die eigentlich daran interessiert sind?

II: Ich denke es kommt drauf an. Klar, wenn man zum Beispiel den deutschen Markt betrachtet, da wollen wirklich viele Agents sustainable sein und sind interessiert. Die fragen uns dann auch an, fragen nach Projekten und was man so machen kann... Aber ich glaube so im Großen und Ganzen... Ich hab halt nicht den ganzen Überblick über den Markt...

I: Und welche Märkte habt ihr, Europa jetzt hauptsächlich?

II: Wir machen alles von Europa, Australien über Amerika. Ich kriege halt aber auch nicht diese Reports, Viele fragen auch nach wenn irgendwelche Katastrophen sind, ob man da spenden kann. Damals wo in Myanmar 2008 dieser Zyklon war, da sind auch viele Oversea sAgents mit Geldspenden gekommen, die wir dann verwenden sollten für einen guten Zweck. Und das Problem ist dann nicht, dass wir nichts machen können, sondern einfach die Sache, dass wenn du ein Unternehmen bist und einfach irgendwie einen gewissen Geldbetrag kriegst, dass der nicht einfach verwendet werden kann, weil ja auch Rechnungen geschrieben werden müssen. Das war uns irgendwie nicht so ganz geheuer und in solch einem Zusammenhang ist dann auch die Idee entstanden, eine andere Einheit zu gründen, die das dann alles formell und offiziell machen darf – und das ist halt die Foundation.

I: Und weil du die ganze Zeit von den Spenden redest, sind die Benefits für die Projekte schon größtenteils finanziell oder gibt es auch noch Andere?

II: Sie sind vor allen Dingen finanziell. Manchmal, wenn wir diese MICE-Gruppen haben, organisieren wir Touren, wo sie beispielsweise zu einer Schule fahren und selber Schulmaterialien kaufen... aber meistens ist es halt doch über Geld. Es ist eigentlich auch sinnvoller Geld zu spenden, weil das ansonsten mit der Verwaltung schwierig wird. Wenn zum Beispiel jemand sag, gut ich hab jetzt hier 5000 Plüschbären, dann ist das zwar schön, aber von dem Geld könnte man auch einfach schon mal etwas Anderes regeln.

I: Okay. Und ist euch auch die Education der Consumer wichtig in Sachen Sustainability?

II: Wir haben eine extra Broschüre, in der halt die ganzen Sachen aufgelistet werden. Weil es natürlich schon wichtig ist, dass derjenige der hier ist natürlich auch ein bisschen im Bilde ist. Darauf legen wir halt Wert. Unsere Guides bekommen auch alle Training und was wir auch haben, was wahrscheinlich relativ selten ist, ist das wir unsere Guides unter Vertrag haben. Das sind halt keine Freelancer, sondern die arbeiten auf Jahresvertrag. Und dadurch können wir halt ein Mal im Jahr ein Training machen und dadurch wissen wir auch, dass sie qualifiziert sind.

I: Okay, das war es dann auch schon von meiner Seite und ich bedanke ich mich an der Stelle für deine Zeit und Mühen...