

Evaluation framework of a knowledge-based tourism project in the rural area

Monika Bandi

<http://trc.aiest.org/members/monika-bandi>

University of Bern, Center for Regional Economic Development (CRED), Research Unit Tourism,
Switzerland

Abstract

The presented paper intends to discuss an evaluation framework for a knowledge-based tourism project in a rural area. First, the evaluation object (Enjoy Switzerland) and the evaluation framework were presented based on literature review and empirical findings. The continuing demand trend towards authentic tourism products implies the potential for success in rural tourism regions. The unique nature and culture of these areas are inimitable points of attraction which bear a future potential that has not been utilised up to now.

During three years, a knowledge-based tourism project has been introduced in four rural regions in Switzerland. The focus of the impulse programme was on strengthening the overall competitiveness in tourism. Improvement possibilities were particularly seen in summer tourism, in the development of marketable products and in the improvement of market access. Due to the service character of tourism products and the consumption of a complete service bundle by the guest, the human capital and the ability to cooperate in the region are two key factors for the further development. The project has tried to create incentives that lead to improvements in these areas. The focus of the implemented measures was set by the regions themselves in a community-based approach.

A summative and formative evaluation has been conducted once during the project period and at the end of the project. Based on different sources (documents, secondary data, enquiry among service providers and interviews of responsible players) an evaluation process has been started. With different indicators in four audit areas the various course of the project in the four regions has been examined. Using a qualitative traffic light system with the two dimensions *room of improvement* and *realized improvement*, the progress of the project has been worked out and allowed a comparison between the four regions. The paper gives an example of an evaluation framework for a knowledge-based improvement in regional economic development based on tourism.

Keywords: Knowledge-based approach, regional economic development, evaluation framework