

Scenarios for skiing tourism in Austria: demographics versus climate change

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From a comparison of the potential impacts of climate change and demographic changes on the ski tourism industry in Austria it was concluded that demographic changes will have a higher impact on skiing tourism than climate change in the first half of the twenty-first century, while climate change could be the more dominant driving force towards the end of the century. Demographic changes include population declines in source countries, and a trend to ageing populations.

Current trends on the supply side, e.g. further extensions of ski areas and increases in transport or accommodation capacity, might not be financially viable. A contraction of the ski market could seriously affect rural municipalities being highly dependent on (skiing) tourism. In order to maintain the current standard of living in these municipalities, the sustainable

development of tourism is absolutely necessary. Thus, the tourism industry is required not only to diversify its product portfolio but it should foster snow-independent tourism activities that are attractive for older age groups.

Source: Steiger, R., 2012. Journal of Sustainable Tourism 20 (6): 867-882.

Photo: Nonanet (www.stckr.com)