

Climate Protection in Tourism and Leisure Activities

Insights from a Tourists' Perspective

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The tourism sector is estimated to contribute some 5% to global CO₂ emissions and is itself highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change (UNWTO, UNEP, & WMO, 2008). In order to reduce global warming, action at the policy level and also in the tourism industry itself are needed (Scott, Gössling, Hall, & Peeters, 2015). The myclimate «Cause We Care» initiative offers the opportunity to offset carbon gas emissions generated by a wide range of tourism activities (excluding aviation) and fosters at the same time sustainability activities in local tourism businesses. The principal idea is that tourists and tourism businesses act together to reduce greenhouse gases and make tourism more ecologically sustainable (see Figure 1).

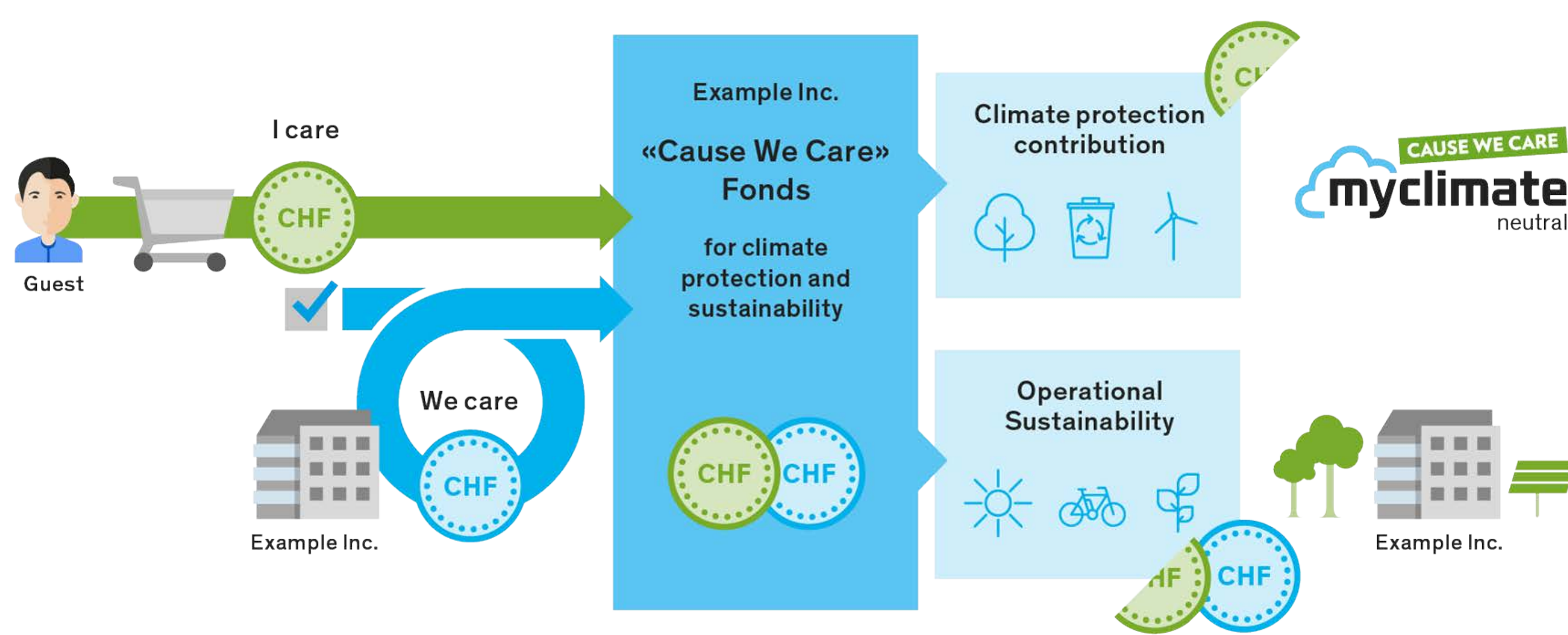


Figure 1 Basic idea and mechanism of the initiative for climate protection and sustainability myclimate «Cause We Care». Source: myclimate

Research Questions

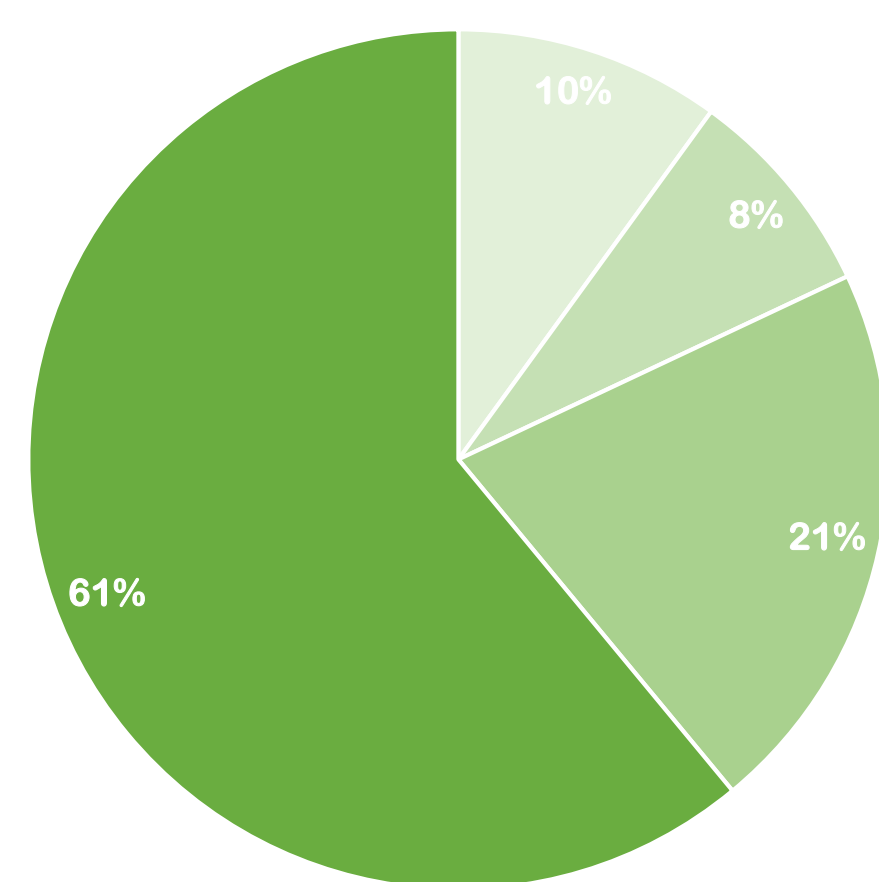
- How do tourists evaluate the use of their contribution to climate protection as part of the myclimate «Cause We Care» initiative (see Figure 1)?
- Which payment modalities would tourists prefer to use to contribute to the «Cause We Care» initiative?

Methodology

1. Online survey via newsletters published by tourism enterprises participating in the «Cause We Care» initiative
→ analysed questionnaires 661
2. Face-to-face survey at three enterprises (mountain railway, cable car, thermal spa) involved in the «Cause We Care» initiative
→ analysed questionnaires 113

Results and Discussion

Half of the tourists' contributions to climate protection and sustainability are used in carbon offsetting projects operated by the myclimate foundation. These projects often involve climate protection activities in developing countries. The other half are used for sustainability activities in tourism enterprises participating in «Cause We Care». This split use of the guests' contribution is appreciated by the respondents (see Figure 2). The approval of this split use suggests that a higher acceptance for carbon offsetting can be achieved by a dual approach involving combined global and local climate protection measures; this in comparison to the usual offsetting approach comprising mainly international activities.



- How my contribution to climate protection is used does not matter to me – the main thing is that I can enjoy climate-neutral leisure activities and holidays.
- I think my total contribution should be used for sustainability activities in the local tourism enterprise
- I think my total contribution should be used for myclimate projects that protect the environment
- I approve of the proposed mechanism that means half of my contributions are used for myclimate projects and half for activities in the local tourism enterprise

Figure 2 Respondents' answers on how to use their contribution for climate protection and sustainability (N=626)

Conclusion

As the respondents accepted the idea of carbon offsetting for tourism activities in general and even for a carbon offsetting by default, it raises the question: Would there be more possibilities for similar carbon offsetting mechanisms when purchasing consumer goods where the emission of greenhouse gases could not otherwise be avoided, e.g. in the nutrition, textiles, furniture industries?

Furthermore, the preference for the split use of the «Cause We Care» contribution for myclimate projects and for activities in the local tourism enterprise indicates that sustainability initiatives in the tourism sector may gain further credence if they were operated in cooperation with organisations known for sustainability and climate protection expertise.

Respondents could rate different payment modalities for the «Cause We Care»-contribution for climate protection and sustainability. They most preferred the "carbon offsetting by default" option (see Figure 3). The most frequently mentioned reason for this answer was that only if carbon offsetting/«Cause We Care»-contribution is fully integrated into the price of a tourism activity would guests pay it. Nevertheless, they agreed that price transparency of the climate contribution is also important. In the examined cases, the price of the carbon offsetting was relatively low. This presumably contributed to the preference for "carbon offsetting by default". These low fees probably explained why "carbon offsetting and possibility for withdrawal" was considered a poorer option (see Figure 3).

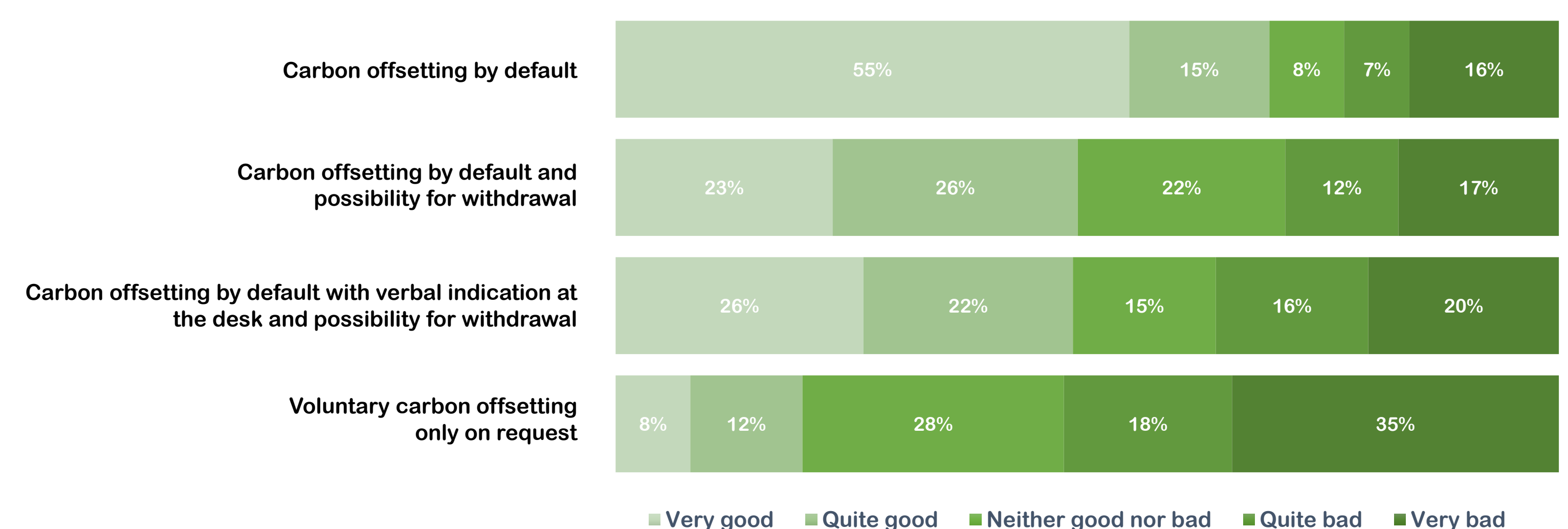


Figure 3 Respondents' ratings of different payment modalities for contributions to climate protection and sustainability (N=113)

References

Scott, D., Gössling, S., Hall, C. M., & Peeters, P. (2015). Can tourism be part of the decarbonized global economy? The costs and risks of alternate carbon reduction policy pathways. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(1), 52–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2015.1107080>

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