

Kerem Kopuz

**An Analysis of the "Natursteig Sieg".
Structures, Resources and Future Potential
as a Sustainable Rural Tourism Region**

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Abstract

Today's tourism industry can be considered as an economically important asset. Particularly in rather structurally weak rural areas, tourism can significantly contribute to secure employment and to generate beneficial income. Rural regions in Germany have a high touristic potential. A tourists increasing demand to relax within a natural environment, away from urbanized areas, offers versatile possibilities to sustainably develop rural tourism. Therefore the analysis of the structures, resources and future potential of the 'Natursteig Sieg', a rural region in North-Rhine- Westphalia is the aim of this thesis. The focus is laid on future perspectives and sustainable development, which is extensively investigated with the help of academic frameworks. The main research was conducted in form of qualitative expert interviews with 7 respective industry stakeholders and participating project partners of the 'Natursteig Sieg'. It has been found that there are several strategic management issues in terms of communication, transparency and marketing which can and should be solved in the long run, in order to guarantee an effective course of action. However, the region as such has indeed a high future potential of being a successful, economically valuable and sustainable rural tourism destination.

Keywords: rural tourism, future potential, Natursteig Sieg,