**Thomas Kohler**

Co-founder travel2change

Associate Professor of Marketing, Hawaiʻi Paciﬁc University

Thomas Kohler is the co-founder of travel2change and an Associate Professor of Marketing at Hawaii Pacific University. Travel2change’s mission is to create a positive impact through travel by connecting travelers and local communities. The platform is shaped by Thomas’ research on how organizations can design innovation platforms. His previous research has been published in journals such as the MIS Quarterly, California Management Review and the Harvard Business Manager. His passion for entrepreneurship and innovation sparked the creation of the Innovation Days as well as new ventures for companies like Philips or Kuoni Travel.

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The inspiration for travel2change came during a windsurfing trip to Mauritius. Thomas noticed that the local community, having been negatively affected by mass tourism development, did not benefit from his travels there. When he returned home, he was driven to find a way that travel can mutually benefit people and places visited, as well as travelers who seek to explore there. His efforts began as a crowdsourcing idea challenge incentivized by trips rewarded to implement the winning project plans. Over the next few years, 10 trips to 10 different countries were realized, each with a unique solution. While beneficial, more effort and funds went into trip planning rather than creating positive impacts. Therefore in 2014, travel2change changed its model from trips, to experiences, so that travelers could join fun and impactful activities while already in their destination. travel2change is currently focused to connect travelers with local communities in Hawaii to create a positive impact.