

Using Open Access to Momentumize Sustainable & Responsible Tourism

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Tourism, which encapsulates the travel and hospitality industry, is regarded as the largest industry in the world in terms of international trade, the world's GDP (10%), and total global employment (8%). It is one of the most globalized industries that can 'shake and move' the world towards the extreme. Hence, tourism industry can be the solution or even the source of the problem for the sustainability of the world.

In the last decade, the concept of sustainable and responsible tourism has melded with mainstream tourism to lose its distinctness. The tourism industry's interest in appearing to be "green", "sustainable" or "responsible" has increased in exponential proportions over the past year. Although tourism is a profitable business (if managed well), yet the industry is taking its toll on the environment (not to mention the economic and social impact on the local communities). For many people today, going on a 'green-holiday' is an increasingly central feature of the travel patterns that has spread across the globe. Consequently, the tourism industry's growth through-out the years has created an increasing amount of stress economically (profit), socially (people) and environmentally (planet) as the carrying capacity of these destinations are not checked or adhered. Thus, resulting in massive destruction of Mother Nature under the guise of development.

Thus, the development of a sustainable and responsible tourism industry is dependent on fulfilling the objectives of all stakeholders in the system, which includes the visitors (tourists), local communities, operators, government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The inter-relationships among the stakeholders must be fully identified since each stakeholder's need and impact may be different from the other. It is imperative to have a holistic understanding of the impact of these mega development plans on key fragile eco and rural destinations.

Hence, the timely introduction of "Open Access (OA)" in the field of tourism that focuses on sustainability and responsibility is certainly the way forward to make this important issue globalized. With OA, there is no financial, legal, or technical barrier (copyright and licensing restrictions) other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Similar to the globalized tourism industry, OA is the answer to the sharing of the critical knowledge and issues in sustainability and responsibility that will shape the world today, tomorrow and for centuries to come.

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