



FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA: RESPONSE

Professor Richard Butler,
University of Strathclyde,
Glasgow, Scotland.



The key issue is whether, and how, digitalisation can move tourism towards a more sustainable form of tourism.



Problems:

- Tourists in general are not responsive to sustainability arguments
- Mass tourism is cheaper, easier and involves less effort for tourists than other forms of tourism
- There are over 1 billion tourists to deal with.



DIGITALISATION CAN:

Provide much more accurate data on actual (as well as anticipated) numbers of tourists to specific locations. At present we rely heavily on estimates, aggregates and wishful thinking. BUT WHILE

The “freedom” given to potential tourists by digitalisation is highly beneficial, it makes planning and management of tourists at destinations much more difficult.



OVERTOURISM:





OVERTOURISM:

A current major area of concern and highly unsustainable for both demand (tourists) and supply (destinations).

Most of the suggestions, often made by travel writers and “concerned” academics are unrealistic and unachievable for the average tourist.



MITIGATION:

Many suggestions to resolve overtourism resemble “re-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic”.

Most tourists face a number of constraints with respect to the location, timing and cost of their holiday(s) and many cannot easily overcome these, even if they wished to

.



UNSUSTAINABLE TOURISM:

As long as there is refusal to accept that numbers are a problem, there will never be effective solutions.

Digital tools could:

- Improve anticipation of behaviour
- Allow better scheduling of visits and opportunities.
- Enable increased economic return.
- Provide more detailed and timely information to tourists.



To take advantage of opportunities presented by digitalisation means much more integration and co-operation between all stakeholders in tourism

Managing tourism at the destination alone is not sufficient to resolve the massive problems we face.



Environmental Management

Digitalisation could:

- Allow the identification of pressure points.
- Provide information for managers and tourists.
- Monitor specific species and habitats.
- Monitoring could enable better enforcement.



Destination Resilience

- Enable the improvement of the ability of destinations to withstand visitation pressures
- This requires adaptation to forces of change.
- Digitalisation can provide some of the data needed.

THANK YOU

RICHARD.BUTLER@STRATH.AC.U
K