

Innovative Technologies in Travel and Tourism – Towards a More Balanced Triple Bottom Line

Ivo Martinac

Contact: im@kth.se

Abstract

While it seems to be gradually dawning on humankind that the quality of our lives and (in extremis) survival of our and subsequent generations will depend to a significant extent on our ability and willingness to make urgent and significant corrections to our lifestyles, it is much less commonly understood how such changes should be structured and pursued towards a wholesomely sustainable outcome.

We urgently need to become more innovative about how we can accelerate the processes through which humankind will realize, understand and appropriately deal with complex environmental, economic and social challenges, natural or man-made. This relates to the pursuit and effects of travel and tourism as much as it concerns any other facet of our lives.

A substantial portion of travel and tourism is pursued to satisfy our needs for leisure, excitement and pleasure. In a world of visibly diminishing natural resources, and rapidly increasing environmental, economic and social challenges, any human activity pursued for pleasure and entertainment should be scrutinized with particular concern for how and to what extent it competes with higher-priority needs, as well as whether and how it can be responsibly pursued in the long term.

We urgently need to become more innovative about the ways we transport, accommodate, feed, entertain and cater to multiple other needs of travelers, such as to develop products, build/modify relevant infrastructure, develop business models and practices, and establish behaviors that will not threaten the ability of subsequent generations to pursue travel and tourism as part of their lifestyle.

While by no means a panacea for responsible tourism, the adoption of more efficient technologies and innovative mechanisms for their implementation can significantly contribute to pursuing a sustainable triple-bottom line in the travel and tourism sector. Innovative technologies are discussed that can be applied towards mitigating resource consumption and environmental impacts in travel and tourism, and mechanisms are presented that can accelerate the adoption and implementation of such technologies on a larger scale.

Rethinking and implementing more efficient infrastructure and technical systems is an urgently required component in the complex transformation travel and tourism needs to undergo to continue enhancing our overall quality of life.

Key words: Responsible tourism, appropriate technologies, implementation mechanisms, resource consumption efficiency, environmental impacts, system approach