

Beyond the environment: do social and cultural dimensions of sustainability matter for tourists? A big data analysis

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism research has mainly concentrated on environmental aspects and the supply side, with limited attention on socio-economic and cultural dimensions from tourists' perspectives. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how international and local travelers discuss sustainability in online reviews of an overcrowded destination. Using a big data approach, we analyzed 325,000 TripAdvisor reviews of 1,445 Iceland attractions over ten years, applying an overarching dictionary for sustainable tourism communication. Findings reveal an increasing focus on socio-economic aspects (e.g., human rights, local economy) and a decline in environmental discussions. Reviews on socio-economic and cultural topics show more positive sentiment, while environmental reviews are more negative. Regression analysis links socio-economic and cultural discussions with higher ratings, suggesting destinations should prioritize these aspects to enhance online satisfaction and their online reputation.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism; overcrowding; Big data;

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