

How “responsible tourism” is advocated on the Internet?

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Introduction

“Uniting adventurers, tourists, travel agencies, and outfitters — everyone who loves to travel, and sees travel as a positive force in the world”.
(Ethical Traveler)

“The world’s best responsible and eco holidays”.
(Responsible Travel)

“Promoting responsible tourism, supporting sustainable development and helping travellers and travel providers protect the cultures and environments they visit”.
(Sustainable Travel International)

These are ambitious statements made by web sites’ authors who present themselves as advocates of responsible tourism in the Internet. The following paper seeks to understand how these web sites use the Internet as a tool of advocacy. To reach this purpose the concepts of Internet and advocacy are presented and a definition for ‘responsible tourism’ is proposed. Then the author explores how the Internet is being used as a tool for advocating political, social, and environmental issues. Finally a critical analysis is made of three web sites: Ethical Traveler, Responsible Travel and Sustainable Travel International, all of which advocate for responsible tourism.

Defining Concepts

Internet

The Internet as we know it today has a history of about thirty years starting as a military project and then transferred for civilian use and control during the 1980s and the 1990s. The privatisation of its operation made the network accessible to the general public and only then most users understood the possibilities for information gathering, social interaction, entertainment, and self-expression offered by the Internet and by a new application called the World Wide Web (Abbate, 1999). The Internet is a network of networks where thousands of computers around the world are connected to each other. The World Wide Web (WWW) is the part of the Internet that supports multimedia and is the main interface used by potential tourists to learn about tourism destinations. The WWW is, in short, a web of databases containing text files, graphics, sound, videos, animation, and other multimedia components (Law, 2000). The Internet is not only the WWW; it is also emails, bulletin board services, file transfers, and access to remote computers. In summary, the Internet offers an array of services that enable a person to transfer, browse, or search for information, make purchases, or interact with other users (Comer, 2000). Internet services handle a variety of digital information that includes text, sound, images, audio and video.

Advocacy

The objective of advocacy is to make sure that people who are initially unable, untrained or inexperienced in expressing their views or engaging in action, are enabled to do so (Benjamin, 1994). The aim of advocacy is then to assist people to be heard and understood, to have their choices expanded, respected and met (Benjamin, 1994). Another definition of advocacy is that is a “device to influence the balance of the needs / rights of the group in the favour of the needs / rights of individuals, especially those on the social margins” (Brandon, 1995; cited in Bateman, 2000, p. 17). As Bateman (2000) illustrates, advocacy comes in many forms, sometimes known as self-advocacy, citizen advocacy and legal advocacy. Environmental advocacy is, then, to give voice to an issue on behalf of the environment or a group of people.

Responsible Tourism

To define responsible tourism has turned to be more difficult than implied by the wide use of such a term. Often responsible tourism is used interchangeably with sustainable tourism and ecotourism, when they

are actually different things. Responsible tourism is sometimes referred also as ethical tourism, People First Tourism, reality tourism, etc. (Mann, 2002). Also abstract definitions can be found such as “responsible tourism cares for the Earth, and means, simply, not exploitation, but sharing” (Litchfield, 2001, p.?). To define responsible tourism the author believes that it is necessary to understand whom are the actors involved, when it must be practiced, where, and what contexts must be considered.

Responsible tourism means for some the ‘appropriate conduct’ that a tourist must display in a destination to respect the cultural, social and environmental contexts. Responsible tourism aims to avoid harmful impacts on people and environments (Mann, 2002). In Grahams (1991) terms: “responsible travel places learning above doing; it calls for visitors to travel with an open mind, to be receptive rather than comparative”. This perspective of responsible tourism implies that the ‘responsibility’ lies on the tourist and it is his/her actions that have a negative impact on the destination. If such implication were correct then one of the responsibilities of the tourist would be to choose ethically the tourism providers from which they consume and make sure that they only purchase from suppliers who are also responsible.

Responsible tourism then also includes another actor in the equation, the tourism entrepreneur: the tour operator, accommodation provider or any other tourism enterprise. It is in this perspective when responsible tourism is interchangeably used with the fashionable term of ‘sustainable tourism’ by the tourism sector’s businesses. Organizations such as the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) have launched a set of responsible tourism guidelines for their members to follow. There are, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), more than 60 voluntary “green” certification programs developed for the tourism industry between 1992 and 2002 (Sustainable Travel International). It is in this attempt of the industry to ‘green’ itself that a heated debate has ignited around the so called ‘green-washing’ of tourism. While some certification programmes might be effective in making the image of tourism suppliers more ‘responsible’, they are lacking to solve the problem and customers are not interested in the programmes (Mader, para. 4). It seems that while the tourism providers based in the tourism generating regions of the world are resistant to adopt real measures to supply a genuine ‘responsible tourism’, tourism providers based in the destination regions are great adopters of such an approach to their businesses. Could it be that the big conglomerates are still catering for the ‘mass tourism’ market uninterested in ‘responsible tourism’ or is it that money is to be lost if one protects the environment and benefits the local communities? It could also be said that tourism operators of the developed world who have adopted real policies and practices of responsible tourism are the small and medium-sized companies. On the other hand, the community-based projects or tourism enterprises created in developing countries closer to the realities of their surroundings and hence more sensitive to its need or is it just a marketing strategy to attract the small, but growing, ethically conscious international tourist. Either way it is important to consider in the equation of responsible tourism the role of the tourism industry.

A third actor to consider in the development of responsible tourism is the government as a tourism planner and policy maker in the destination regions. Husbands and Harrison have noted that (1996, p. 2):

“Although many are aware of the underlying principles, it is evident that practising responsible tourism involves more than simply having the desire to do so. Responsible tourism represents a way of *doing* tourism planning, policy, and development to ensure that benefits are optimally distributed among impacted populations, governments, tourists, and investors. Furthermore, responsible tourism practices require strong leadership and involve ways of managing tourism resources to achieve optimum benefits for the different communities of interest. In short, responsible tourism is *not* a tourism product or brand. It is a way of *doing* tourism.”

Ireland (1997) encompasses the role of tourism providers and governments by saying that socially responsible tourism is achievable under certain conditions of development which include a careful balance between regulation of the tourism industry via planning legislation and efforts to effect change through voluntary codes of conduct. Not only does she highlight the role of these two actors already mentioned but also of the tourist as a consumer. All demanding the capital of tourism (the irreplaceable culture and environment which comprise the host destinations), together with the host community, and proposes that a demand management system would help maintain destinations must be put in place before any further growth in tourism takes place (Ireland, 1997). So finally the local communities are mentioned as another actor in this search for a responsible tourism.

Although the actors to be considered to practice a responsible tourism have been identified, the following questions remain unanswered: what is the objective of responsible tourism? When should responsible tourism be practiced? And, where should responsible be sought? With regard to the objective of responsible tourism it was above mentioned that it “represents a way of doing tourism planning, policy

and development to that the benefits are optimally distributed among impacted populations, governments, tourists and investors” (Husbands and Harrison, 1996, p. 2). As noted before this is a very governmental perspective, if the government is considered as the planner of tourism at a national level. Finally responsible tourism must be practiced throughout the different regions of the tourism system (generating, transit, and destination regions), the travel stages of tourist (the anticipation, travel to site, on-site experience, travel home, and recollection), and considering the contexts of the mentioned regions (natural, social, cultural, economic and political) (Rhodes, 2004).

Having done this exercise of understanding responsible tourism and trying to encompass the basic elements to consider, a definition can be proposed:

Responsible tourism is a way of doing tourism by governments, private enterprises, tourists and communities that seeks to increase benefits and minimize negative impacts in the natural, socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of the tourism system regions (with special focus on the destination region) throughout the various stages of the tourist experience.

Advocacy through the Internet

Internet activism and advocacy has increased through the 1990s and is now a constant reality for all users of the Internet. Who has not received a forwarded email promoting human rights or gathering signatures to save the Amazon rainforest? Millions of people participated in vigils for peace trying to stop the war in Iraq in 2003, promoted by an organization through their web site Moveon.org. In Hungersite.com “your click on the ‘Give Free Food’ button funds food for the hungry, paid for by site sponsors whose ads appear after you click and provided to people in need around the world through the efforts of Mercy Corps and America’s Second Harvest”. The Internet is then a medium to actively engage in social change.

There are three forms of Internet politics: “politics within the Net, politics which impacts the Net, and political uses of the Net” (Resnick, 1997: cited in Meikle, 2002). The third category refers to the political uses of the Internet to cause social or cultural change in the ‘real’ world. As in Meikle’s (2002) book ‘Future Active’ this article is interested in this third type of politics through the Internet.

The Internet has become the tool chosen by activists for spreading information about multinationals around the globe, unnerving the managers and stockholders of such corporations (Klein, 2001): “The beauty of the Net for activists is that it allows coordinated international actions with minimal resources and bureaucracy” (p. 395). The Internet seems more than an organizing tool, an organizing model that promotes and enables decentralized cooperative decision-making. It facilitates the process of information sharing and forging links between organizations and groups around the world (Klein, 2001). Behind the Stop-Exxon-Mobil movement is a well-organised distribution of information on the WWW converting it in a global environmental campaign against the policies of that multinational corporation (Knight, 2003). Civil organizations prepared months in advance for the famous Seattle anti-globalization protests, and they used the Internet to share information between them and offer resources for activists planning to attend. Web sites supplied resources, while emails and listservs were used to coordinate, inform, organize and train (Meikle, 2002).

The Internet is not only an organizing model; it is the medium where activism takes place. A new term has risen from this use of the Internet for activism, ‘hacktivism’ which “was born at the moment techies became political and activists became wired” (Dyrness, 2003). Hacktivism is the term journalists have coined for the actions which activists call ‘electronic civil disobedience’. Hacktivism could be defined as “engaged politics which seeks solutions in software, in the search for a specific technological fix to a social problem” (Meikle, 2002, p. 141). Net strikes comprise denial of services (IT systems breakdown eg May 1996, Usenet newsgroup alt.religion.scientology) or online strikes (e-commerce blocks - eg Adbusters, Buying nothing day) (Illia, 2003).

Online activism includes many type of actions, for example online boycotts which comes in diverse forms, for example, corporation’s web site replicas which change all the content presenting negative information about the targeted company. An example was “when a squatter secured rights to the URL ‘Monstantos.com,’ and reproduced the life sciences company’s web site design impeccably - but with different content” (Armon & Lukaszewski, 2000, p.1). Software can be used to post messages on top of the web pages images to make comments on the content of the targeted company. The extreme is a web site (www.gatt.org) passing as the World Trade Organization’s web site and accepting public-speaking invitations to go around impersonating the WTO to undermine the organization and expressing the absurdities of trade liberalization (Dyrness, 2003).

Responsible Tourism Advocacy on the Internet

The following section explores how responsible tourism is advocated on the Internet, who are some of the main advocates, who are the target audiences of these web sites, what are the results and their opinions on advocating responsible tourism on the Net. Three web sites were identified as a representation of the online efforts for advocating for a responsible tourism. The web sites are: Ethical Traveler, Responsible Travel, and Sustainable Travel International.

The information for analysis was obtained by accessing the web sites of the mentioned organizations and by sending a short set of questions to be answered by the directors, coordinators or founders of the web sites. These questions were: 1) how do you define 'responsible tourism'? 2) Has 'the organization' been successful? How do you define success in advocating for 'responsible tourism'? Which are your measurements of success? 3) Is the Internet the only media used by you to advocate for 'responsible tourism'? And if not, which other mediums do you use? 4) Do you think the Internet can be an effective medium to advocate for 'responsible tourism'? In the cases of Sustainable Travel International and Ethical Traveler the phrase 'responsible tourism' was changed for 'sustainable travel' or 'ethical travel' respectively. The concept was not the important issue, but if the organization thought that Internet was an effective medium of advocacy.

Ethical Traveler

The domain of this organization is www.ethicaltraveler.com. The author of this web site makes a direct quotation which explains the objectives and actions of the web site:

"Ethical Traveler is the first grass-roots alliance uniting adventurers, tourists, travel agencies, and outfitters — everyone who loves to travel, and sees travel as a positive force in the world. We feel that all travelers are, in effect, freelance ambassadors. We also believe that we have the ability to join our voices, and to use our economic power to strengthen human rights and protect the environment."

(www.ethicaltraveler.com)

Ethical Traveler (ET) as an initiative created and based in the United States focuses its attention on fostering participation of "adventurers, tourists, travel agencies, and outfitters" mainly of the USA, although as its executive director Jeff Greenwald mentions "everyone from Palestinian schoolchildren to Chilean astronomers can have instant access to our campaigns and our community" (personal communication, June 1, 2004). Ethical Traveler has become part of the family of projects under the Earth Island Institute. An 'Ethical Traveler' is defined as "an individual who is aware of the impact of their travels, realizes that as a traveler he or she is a de facto ambassador, and has made an effort to turn their travels into a form of pro-activism" (J. Greenwald, personal communication, June 1, 2004).

The structure of the web site is divided between information about the organization, contact information, and other sections called: Explore, Act and Discuss. The "explore" section provides online resources and links so people can be informed about the destinations they plan to visit. It divides the links between "Detailed Country Information", "Allies, Action Orgs, and Kindred Spirits" and "Guidelines for Ethical Travel". The "Discuss" section includes online forums, a registration form to receive news and "announcements on relevant issues", a possibility to contribute money or donations-in-kind for the cause, and information of the web site. The most important section is the one called "Action" which informs people about the campaigns of the organization and enables people to email "a letter in support of one of Ethical Traveler's global campaigns". Letters are sent to government officials of the countries where the campaigns are focused to make them aware that people are concerned and paying attention to the devastation of the ecosystem in their countries and expect them to do the same. At the moment Ethical Traveler is advocating for causes in Tibet, Costa Rica and Ecuador.

Ethical Traveler can be seen then as an online enabler for concerned tourists to express their voice and support the campaigns advocated by the organization. The target audience of the campaigns are the governments of the countries where the issue of concern is localized. Ethical Traveler uses the Internet to inform users of relevant issues concerning the impact of tourism on the social, cultural and natural contexts of the destination regions and empowers them to support a cause and show this to the governments. This strategy is similar to the actions directed by Amnesty International (AI) in the defence of human rights around the world. Compared to AI which focuses on specific individual cases, Ethical

Traveler focuses on one issue. As Jeff Greenwald says “the travel community, as a whole has mind-boggling power -- both economic and social -- that can be cultivated and directed in order to impact environmental issues and protect human rights. Part of our mission is to harness this power, and turn the global community of travelers into an informed alliance.” (Personal communication, June 1, 2004). Michael McColl, director of communications, complements by saying that they “have proven that travelers, when united, can make a difference” (Personal communication, June 10, 2004).

Ethical Traveler measures its success of the advocacy work in different ways. The main one is by the successful impact of their letter-writing campaigns (J. Greenwald, personal communication, June 1, 2004). Together with this, other indicators are the amount of traffic the web site has, their broad-based membership, the increase of resources and finally their ability to win grants (J. Greenwald, personal communication, June 1, 2004). Although the Internet is the main tool for advocacy the organizations also relies on opinion editorial pieces in national newspapers, speaking engagements, conferences, newspaper and magazine interviews, publications of their brochure, and using the Earth Island Journal (J. Greenwald, personal communication, June 1, 2004). Interlinked with the use of Internet Michael McColl believes “that word of mouth will be our most effective media” (Personal communication, June 10, 2004). Even then the executive director of the organization mentions that “I personally doubt there’s a better advocacy medium than the Internet” (Personal communication, June 1, 2004). And Michael McColl, director of communication, adds “the Internet also allows us much more visibility than a group like ours might have had in earlier eras” (Personal communication, June 10, 2004).

Responsible Travel

The following web site has its domain in www.responsibletravel.com. Responsible Travel (RT) was launched in 2001 to help travellers book more real and authentic holidays that also benefit the environment and local people. The UK-based travel firm was set up two years ago with backing from Body Shop founder, Anita Roddick (“Responsible Travel”, 2003). Responsible Travel describes its work as marketing “carefully pre-screened holidays from over 170 leading worldwide tourism brands and businesses” not acting as middleman because the tourist can contact the experts who run the trips and hotels directly to make a booking.

As a UK-based company its main target audience is the traveling market of that country. This is very positive because the United Kingdom is one of the main generating tourism regions of the world (World Tourism Organization, 1999), although possibly the membership to its eMagazine which is now in the 22,000 includes people from many other countries. The advocacy of this company is centered in the logic that to promote responsible tourism the consumers can push the industry by purchasing products and services which are ‘responsible’. Responsible Travel as mentioned in its web site is an online travel agent that connects travellers directly with operators or accommodation owners; a marketplace for the industry to generate bookings from outstanding trips and accommodations that benefit the local community and the environment; a network for the industry and local communities to promote information about responsible travel products, projects and initiatives; a forum that enables travellers to feed back information about responsible travel products.

The way in which Responsible Travel achieves all these functions is through a strong emphasis in promoting the vacation offerings of its company members through its “Holiday Searching” tools. It is important to highlight that company members promoted in this web site must undergo a process of selection to demonstrate that their policy and practice meet the [responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com) minimum standards. The elements screened include policy and procedure which encompass environmental, social and economic concerns. According to the web site the companies must provide ‘evidence’ of all their policies, which means that companies might become, members when in the practice they are not truly ‘responsible’. To solve this grey area, Responsible Travel contacts travellers who have used the services of determined company members to verify that their policies are realities (although the company member must authorize this practice beforehand). Responsible Travel states that it does “not expect travellers to be responsible travel experts and simply ask them to confirm whether specific activities that our members claim to have undertaken (such as providing travellers with advice on minimising negative cultural impacts) have been completed”.

Other sections of the web site like “eMagazine”, “Traveller’s Tips” and “Campaigns” are also directed at the tourist and complement the information supplied to promote responsible tourism. It is then important to remember that the main strategy of this company is to promote responsible tourism through the promotion of ‘ethical consumption’. Another important feature is that the tourist not only is a consumer, but also an auditor from time to time to report the positive and the negative aspects of the operator. It is

the idea of 'consumer power' and economic boycott. With this twist of the advocacy strategy Responsible Travel is also targeting the tourism operators.

The criteria Responsible Travel uses to measure the success of their work includes: growing sales for responsible tourism organisations, building consumer and media awareness, advising member organisations on policies and, campaigning for change in tourism (Justin Francis, Personal communication, June 22, 2004). Other mediums used by Responsible Travel to reach its goals are supplements in the national press, press advertising, trade shows and talks in events. Justin Francis, co-founder of Responsible Travel, expresses excitedly the effectiveness of Internet as an advocacy tool by saying that "the Internet is effective for tourism in general. We had nearly up to 800 people a day sign on-line campaigning petitions" (Personal communication, June 22, 2004).

Sustainable Travel International

The domain name of this organization is www.sustainabletravelinternational.org. Founded in 2002, Sustainable Travel International (STI) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building awareness, appreciation and respect for local people and our environment through education and outreach. It is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in the United States (US). Their focus "is on promoting global sustainable tourism development and providing eco-certification for U.S. tourism providers who incorporate financially viable, environmentally and socially responsible practices into their operations, so consumers can buy and book with confidence". It is then obvious that its main target audience are the 'US tourism providers', although they also include companies from other countries. Brian T. Mullis, president of STI, defines responsible tourism as follows: "Responsible tourism in its purest form is travel that positively benefits travelers, host communities and their culture and environments. Local people are not exploited and natural and/or cultural resources are not threatened. Travelers benefit by learning from others and seeing a different way of life through their eyes. Host communities and local people gain greater economic benefits and a better quality of life. And local cultures and the environment are preserved in their natural state" (Personal communication, July 9, 2004).

It is obvious from the structure of their web site that their target audience are the companies. The sections dedicated to companies include "Education & Training", "Eco-Certification", "Membership" and "e-Newsletter". This last section is also for tourists interested in receiving information concerning sustainable travel directly to their emails. Together with this section the main tool for tourists to find 'responsible tourism providers' is the "Eco-Directory". Through the analysis of the web site's structure it is evident that the focus on certifying 'sustainable' tourism providers is the greatest aim of the organization. Although this might be the impression of the author Brian T. Mullis emphasizes the work of STI in two target audiences (travellers and travel providers) "promoting responsible tourism, supporting sustainable development and helping travelers and travel providers protect the environments and cultures they visit" (Personal communication, July 9, 2004).

The web site seems more an online brochure of their work as advocates of sustainable tourism than a medium of advocacy. The marginal focus on the Eco-Directory, which is well designed and effective as a searching tool, undermines the exposure of the member companies. It seems that STI is more concerned on adding tourism providers to their certification scheme than in promoting the companies included in the scheme. But STI is more than meets the eye by just viewing the web site, which is a shame, and the following statement of its president highlights new developments of their work:

We have begun the process of educating the U.S. travel and tourism industry and U.S. consumers about sustainable tourism. We have developed (or are working on developing) several tools to help the industry and consumers mitigate their negative impacts and enhance their positive impacts, including but not limited to an Eco-label, User's Guide to Sustainability, Eco-directory, educational training materials, and a carbon offsets and travelers' philanthropy program. Also, our web site is receiving upwards of 20K unique visitors per month, our opt-in email list now has ~4200 subscribers, we have ~100 members from more than 30 different countries, and we are currently staffed 100% by some 25 volunteers

(Brian T. Mullis, Personal communication, July 9, 2004)

STI's president views the Internet as an effective tool of advocacy, but in the same way as the above mentioned organizations, STI uses other mediums to deliver its message. "We also participate in trade shows and conferences. We "guest" teach courses at local universities. We have developed strategic

partnerships with several key stakeholder organizations. We have an extensive PR campaign. And the more money we generate, the more we can accomplish in the short-term" (Brian T. Mullis, Personal communication, July 9, 2004).

Critical Assessment

Three web sites advocating for responsible tourism have been presented. The structure of the web sites has been described to identify the purposes, target audiences, and methods used to advocate for a responsible tourism through the Internet. Because the web sites have been individually covered it is important to compare their attributes and discover differences and similarities.

It is very interesting to see that the most similar web sites with regard to their purpose are the ones of Sustainable Travel International (STI) and Responsible Travel (RT). Even though the end is the same the means are different because of the emphasis certain issues have over others. While both web sites "certify" responsible tourism providers the focus on this objective is much stronger in STI. It seems that the final end of STI is to certify tourism providers per se, while, on the other hand, RT "certification" is a means to the end of helping market responsible tourism providers. By certifying their members RT is assuring that their customers purchase 'responsible and eco holidays'. STI approach is much more 'professional' on the certification requirements and processes, but the emphasis on promoting their members is quite diluted in the web site. Another difference is the emphasis on the role of the tourist as an advocate of responsible tourism. RT is stronger in the message of 'you can make a difference', than STI. Both web sites are promoting ethical consumption as a tool of advocating for responsible tourism.

Other differences between the web sites of STI and RT are the target audiences. One focuses more on the UK market, while the other focuses on the US market. Another difference that rises from their contrary approach is that while RT clearly targets 'the tourist', STI focuses on the 'tourism provider'. Finally the type of organization is a difference that might also explain their approaches, while RT is a private company wanting to make profit and hence sell holidays, STI is a not-for-profit organization which has as one of its income sources the sale of its 'certification program'.

Compared to these web sites, Ethical Traveler (ET) is a quite different advocate of responsible tourism. Jeff Greenwald, executive director of ET, clearly marks the difference by saying that their "view includes the tenets of responsible tourism, but is not limited to the economics of individual or even group travel" (Personal communication, June 1, 2004). Similar to STI, ET has been adopted by an NGO - the Earth Island Institute - and hence it is not a profit-making organization. Another similarity shared by STI and ET is that both web sites promote the participation of tourist in their advocacy efforts. The great difference between ET with the other two web sites is that their target audience are the governments of countries in which ET is directing their campaigns. Also the web site functions as a medium where people can actively and directly participate, join, support and campaign for the issues promoted by ET. RT also enables users to sign a petition online, and they send it to big tour operators who are typically 'not listening'.

Conclusions

Although the term 'responsible tourism' is increasingly being mentioned and advocated for, there was a need to better define this concept. This paper has proposed a definition of responsible tourism as a first step to understand how it is advocated on the Internet. Responsible tourism is a way of doing tourism by governments, private enterprises, tourists and communities that searches to increase benefits and minimize negative impacts in the natural, socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of the tourism system regions (with special focus on the destination region) throughout the various stages of the tourist experience.

Secondly, three web sites advocating for responsible tourism have been presented and discussed to understand how Internet is being used for advocacy. It can be concluded that although the web sites share certain similarities and display contrasting differences, all of them have projected their goals internationally thanks to the Internet as global communication network.

This paper contributes to the understanding of responsible tourism as a concept as well as exploring the Internet as an effective tool for advocacy. Although only three web sites were analyzed, it can be considered a significant representation because they are the main online advocates of responsible tourism in the world. Even though this is true and they try to mobilize the public opinion of two of the main tourism generating region in the world, it is considered important for further analysis to compare the

presence or non-presence of the concept of responsible tourism in leading tourism web sites of global reach.

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