

Tourism and Climate Change in China: A Research Agenda for Social Scientists

Abstract

Tourism is a major contributor to climate change as it is responsible for 8.8% of global carbon emissions. Yet, tourism is also considered one of the industries least prepared for climate change. While the tourism industry has experienced exponential growth over the past half-century or so, the intensification of climate change and dire warnings from the scientific community call into question its continued growth and expansion. As tourism is an official pillar industry in Hong Kong and a significant industry throughout China as a whole, a thriving tourism sector plays an important role in enabling sustainable development in China. Social scientists can contribute to the task of developing a tourism industry that is resilient in the face of climate change and other disruptions. In this presentation, I extend three ‘invitations’ for social scientists working in the areas of transport, climate change and/or sustainable tourism. They are: (i) to leverage the considerable resilience of tourism; (ii) to experiment with tracking technologies to improve the sustainability of tourist movements, and (iii) to develop a research agenda pursuing low-carbon and regional tourism options.

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