

‘Travel Back Better’: Digital Discourses of Sustainable Tourism ———

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The concept of ‘travelling back better’ that imbues the post-pandemic global tourism industry emphasises the urgency of sustainable tourism practices. As a matter of fact, today sustainable travel is invoked by multiple stakeholders, including tourism national boards, airlines, young climate activists and travel influencers, down to consumers that increasingly rate environmentally-friendly behaviour positively (Torkington et al. 2020; Mariani & Borghi 2022; Paganoni 2022; Kilipiri et al. 2023; Piispa 2023). However, the fragmentation of approaches, industry-oriented greenwashing and a lack of a culture of sustainability hamper more responsible forms of tourism and travel.

Considering this complex landscape, this paper concentrates on instances of virtual communities that strive to gather around a collective vision of sustainable tourism (Al Zidjaly 2019). To this purpose, the focus will be placed on the Future of Tourism Coalition, a partnership of six non-governmental, non-profit organisations that have joined forces to educate in sustainable tourism, supported by an impressive number of signatories. By examining the Coalition’s website and those of its partners with the tools of Critical Discourse Studies, the paper explores how sustainable tourism is discursively constructed in terms of values, priorities and objectives in the post-pandemic context.

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