

Title: Digital Age; WorldTours Mitigation of Misinformation in Impact Assessment

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Abstract

The presentation is from impact assessment of over 50 facilities in the tourism sector in Uganda. It determined the status of Impact Assessment (IA) compliance and interlinkage with tourism business. It puts into perspective motivations, biases and limitations of implementing greening compliance initiatives by the tourism operators in their day-to-day operations. WorldTours is a self-feed and functioning digital platform where the tourist provides information anonymously. The unbiased information helps the developer to identify general IA compliance gaps and correction opportunities. The developer is informed about the facility's status on Health and Safety, Waste Management, Biodiversity Conservation and resource utilization and optimization. The platform connects the developer to Environmental Practitioners in their respective localities to provide environmental management services. This promotes IA compliance and mitigates misinformation.

Summary Statement: The dominant changing trends in the digital era require harnessing technology for accurate reliable data for information to promote IA compliance as an ecosystem of stakeholders.

Introduction

The world is fast changing with the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The various ICT platforms like the mobile applications (Apps) have shaped society. The internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), and mobile communications have become an intrinsic element of today's society and each of its members' lives. Our everyday life experiences have been immersed in a new reality, which is significantly dissimilar from the habitual realities in which people have lived for thousands of years (Levin & Mamlok, 2021).

The internet has promoted effectiveness in communicating tailored information to different groups of people in various locations. Technological advances have increased the spread of information and democratized its consumption globally. There are obvious benefits associated with instantaneous access to information. The dissemination of information allows ideas to be shared and formerly inaccessible regions to be connected. (Burkhardt, 2017).

The internet has increased freedom for information dissemination which has also promoted misinformation and disinformation. Joanna M. Burkhardt, 2017 states that; Because the internet is available to everyone, anyone can write and post what they like, whether they have any expertise or experience with the subject.

Disinformation is fake or inaccurate information that is intentionally spread to mislead and/or deceive. Misinformation is false content shared by a person who does not realize it is false or misleading (Shu, K. et al 2020). Misinformation can also cancel out the impact of accurate information. When people are presented with two conflicting pieces of information, the two can cancel each other out (Lewandowsky, 2021).

Misinformation and Disinformation in Impact Assessment (IA) has been perpetrated through Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) processes mainly at its implementation. It lies between the project proponent, the community, IA practitioners and the regulator through misapplication or manipulation of the law, project appraisals, monitoring environmental audits. Emphasis on policing, sanctions and penalty method is an incentive to disinformation and undermines the benefits of IA such as cost reduction, community acceptance, voluntary compliance and ultimately business enterprise promotion and development.

The tourism industry, a dynamic and rapidly evolving sector, contributes significantly to global economies, generating over \$10 trillion annually and accounting for approximately 10% of global GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023).

Tourism is a multisectoral industry that to a considerable degree relies on the natural environment and climate conditions, making it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (Scott & Gössling, 2022; UNWTO-UNEP-WMO 2008).

A 2023 study by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council found that 45% of tourism operators viewed sustainability as a cost rather than an opportunity. Over tourism in Venice contributes to an estimated €1 billion in damages annually, including environmental degradation and infrastructure strain (European Parliament, 2022). Businesses can integrate sustainability into their value proposition by marketing eco-friendly experiences, which are increasingly demanded by travelers.

Through an impact assessment study that was conducted on over 50 facilities in the tourism sector in Uganda, it was identified that these facilities were mis/disinformed about impact assessment. The misinformation varied from facility to facility pertaining to parameters of ESIA process and particular approval conditions for project implementation. Oblivious to the carbon footprint, parameters of resource utilization (energy and water), waste management, health and safety aspects and biodiversity conservation were perceived differently by the proponent and the users (tourists).

The level of IA misinformation varied with the size of the tourist facility. The smaller the facility, the higher the level of misinformation and vice versa. Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) frameworks were lacking in both the small and big facilities.

Objective of the study

To provide a digital contemporary and futuristic sustainability footprint solution to Impact Assessment (IA) misinformation and disinformation in tourism.

WorldTours App. as a solution to misinformation in IA

The WorldTours App. is a pocket travel guide that connects tourists to service providers around the world for accommodation, travel, tour advisory and guiding, using web and mobile application. Invented by a team of software engineers and environmental practitioners, the App. promotes sustainable tourism that regenerates and restores natural habitats, climate change mitigation for a healthier planet. The App. can be accessed on web at <https://worldtoursapp.com/>, on App and Play store at <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/worldtours/id6475713907> and <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mywworld.tourz> respectively.

In the entanglement of perpetuation of misinformation about IA, there is failure in hospitality making the tourist the vintage loser. The App. motivates tourists and proponents in the tourism industry to be concerned, alert and aware of environmental aspects of water, and energy resources, waste management, biodiversity, Health and Safety to be able to make a contribution towards climate change mitigation.

The App. collects and records a facility's baseline information at registration indicating the level of compliance with environmental requirements. Sensitization about the good environmental practices to improve compliance is conducted on the App. through the Green Awareness forms. This helps to communicate the right information to the proponents about IA and environmental compliance hence mitigation of misinformation.

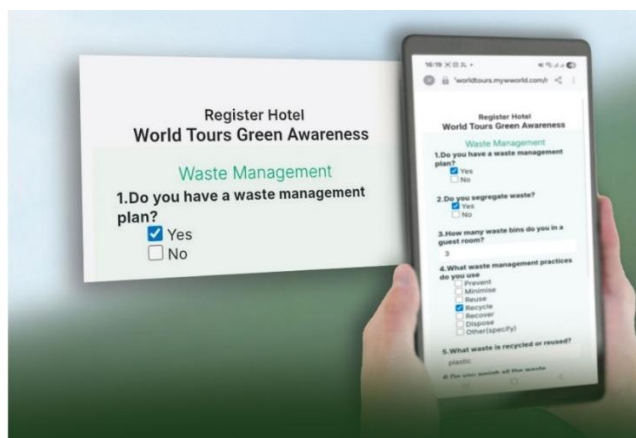


Figure 1: A green form about Waste Management

The App. presents a platform for proponents and tourism players in accommodation, airlines, guiding and tour operators to connect with Environmental Practitioners in their respective localities to provide environmental management services such as acquisition of statutory permits, environmental protection awareness and periodic assessments and monitoring. This is done through the extensive awareness about the obligations of the proponent towards IA and Environmental Compliance in general. The App. explicitly sends monthly reminders (prompts) to proponents to contact practitioners for the various services to improve their environmental performance.

Through providing the right information and connecting proponents to practitioners, WorldTours App. mitigates misinformation in impact assessment improving environmental performance.

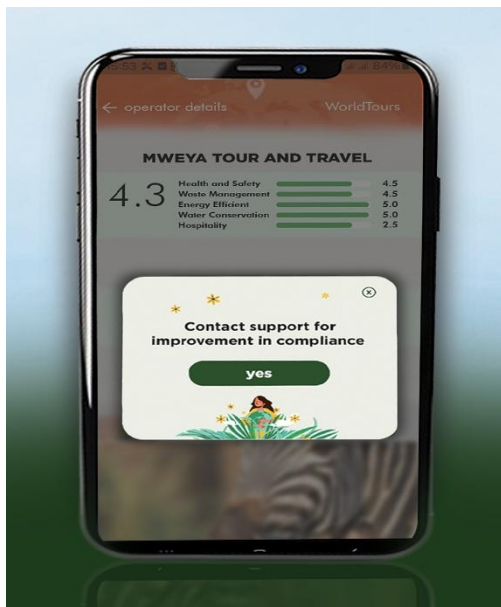


Figure 2: Connecting the proponent to the practitioner

Conclusion

WorldTours App. controls Misinformation and Disinformation through presenting accurate information about compliance practices and connecting proponents with environmental professionals to offer advisory services and improve environmental performance. Aslanova, 2025 notes that implementing modern management principles in tourism is essential for addressing contemporary challenges like sustainability, digitalization, and stakeholder engagement. In absence of Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) framework, the App. is a strategic environmental performance compliance alternative.



Figure 3: Poster presented at IAIA26 in Québec City

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