Transition Pathway for Sustainable Governance in Tourism: Opportunities of AI in Higher Education

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Tourism represents a complex ecosystem, including organizations and businesses from multiple sectors complementing each other. However, this interdependency also holds challenges regarding policy actions and regulations that enable fair and sustainable governance. The European Commission addresses these challenges through their 'Transition Pathway for Tourism', mainly focusing on digitalization aspects of the tourism ecosystem. In conjunction with the European 'Green Deal' agenda, this pathway aims to unify digital transformation efforts and sustainability for increased resilience. Within the transition pathway, skills and education play a crucial role as the underlying foundation. This holds particularly true for the included core topics that foresee i) the technical implementation of tourism data spaces, which enable ii) data-driven tourism services that involve iii) collaborative governance of tourism destinations and require iv) a general pact for skills in tourism. The strong transdisciplinary aspect of the transition pathway becomes apparent as all relevant stakeholders – be it on a local, regional, or national/international level – need not only to interact but also to collaborate. These requirements, topic-wise and collaboration-wise, increase the pressure on existing educational programs. An essential aspect here is lifelong learning, as it is not enough to educate the workforce of tomorrow but also offer a perspective for individuals already engaged within the tourism sector. In the future it will be vital for everyone to understand the potential impact and unintended side-effects of digitalization and the use of digital tools for personal decision-making, information gathering, and learning. Furthermore, privacy and ethics will play a significant role as the underlying foundation for a cohesive ecosystem. This contribution hence discusses the possibilities that artificial intelligence (AI) can bring to the table within higher educational settings from a 360-degree perspective, covering AI through the lens of educators, students, and practitioners.