

Assessing the Quality of Volunteered Geographic Information for Tourism Policy Recommendations as an Adaptive Response to Climate Change

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Abstract

The effects of climate change have been detected in various natural systems in the last century (McCarthy et al., 2001; Parmesan & Yohe, 2003; Adger et al., 2005). As a consequence of these changes, societies and industries are seeking adaptation measures to protect their economic well-being and improve current safety measures (Adger et al., 2005). Coastal areas, specifically, are vulnerable to a changing climate as sea level is expected to rise by 50 cm or more during this century (Nicholls et al., 2011). These unpredictable weather patterns are likely to negatively affect the economies of coastal communities, primarily those with industries that depend on the natural environment. For this research, the Region of Queens Municipality in Nova Scotia was selected as the study area since adaptation resources are limited, and the tourism industry has a significant role in the economy of its coastal communities (NSDTCH, 2011). Community-based adaptation (CBA) to climate change promotes community participation to develop adaptation plans which address local climate vulnerabilities, development needs, and priorities (Forsyth, 2013; Magee, 2013). However, this approach is resource intensive (Van Aalst et al., 2008), and the information gathered in one community often cannot be applied to large-scale climate change policies (Forsyth, 2013). To tackle these limitations, a Geoweb was developed to display climate change scenarios (e.g.: sea level rise), and as a platform where decision-makers, stakeholders, and researchers can engage in online discussions. This study concentrates in two main research fields. First, the Geoweb is tested for its ability to display information as visual maps, and as a platform to promote discussion about climate change between tourism stakeholders and researchers. Second, the user generated content is tested to determine whether the data is of sufficient quality to aid in policy recommendations for the future of the tourism industry.

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