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Edizioni

ISSN 2611-3171

21st Century Landscape Sustainability, Development and Transformations: Geographical Perceptions

Giovanni Messina, Bresena Kopliku (Eds)

5. Social media and the iconization of natural landscapes in tourism discourse

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Abstract

The chapter discusses the impacts of tourism and digital technology enhancements on natural and mountain landscapes. Over the past two decades, nature tourism destinations witnessed an increase in interest, more recently and partially driven by the pandemic that has favored outdoors and proximity tourism. Jointly, with the advent of Web 2.0, digital communication, and user-generated content, visual storytelling is increasingly shaping tourism practices and places (Giudici *et al.*, 2021; Piva & Tadini, 2021; Savi & Emanuel, 2021). The role of photography and video shooting shifted from being a mere playful act into an empowerment tool that iconizes reality. Given these premises, the chapter addresses the social media imaginary produced by tourists in visual representations of natural landscapes, notably mountain destinations, to understand the effects of geo-referencing and online sharing by e-communities committed to travel blogging. It is the case of Horseshoe Bend Canyon, Lake Braies, and Val Verzasca, where sudden popularity on social media caused overcrowding issues. As content sharing may result in the transition of an unspoiled place to a desirable destination, the focus is on the narrative devices

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employed since the origin of landscape iconography, from romantic paintings to contemporary post-photography; also, on the relationship between tourism and spreadability (Jenkins, 2013) and the concept of the social landscape in which images influence the perception of a place and its promotion, flattens tourism experience, standardize behaviors and the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Keywords:

Social media, tourist gaze, landscape photography, overtourism, mediatization



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