

An Opinion Piece on #ChatGPT – What do Generative Artificial Intelligence Technologies Reveal about Responsible Tourism Education that We don't Already Know?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the value of ChatGPT in terms of its responses and depth of progressing responsible tourism education. It is one of the first attempts to ascertain how ChatGPT responds to human-led queries, and whether it can formulate innovative ideas to advance responsible tourism theories into educational curriculum and assessments in the future. An 'interview' was conducted with ChatGPT to explore the chatbot's responses to a series of questions related to responsible tourism education. The questions were informed by developments on the concept of responsible tourism, and to ascertain whether the chatbot can synthesise and generate radically innovative ideas to advance how the concept can be taught in the future. ChatGPT provided quick responses to 'interview' questions posed on its platform. It does engage with the conversation and can formulate preliminary insights to educate students on responsible tourism stakeholder engagement for women and minority groups, though it does not necessarily have the depth to explain how these stakeholders can be equipped to realise desired outcomes. In addition, the ideas emanating from ChatGPT appear rather obvious, with few radical or innovative outcomes to drive the educational landscape of responsible tourism forward.

Keywords: *Tourism curriculum, sustainable tourism, community engagement, human-machine interaction, chatbot*

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Introduction

The introduction of Generative Artificial Intelligence Technologies (hereafter abbreviated as GAIT) such as ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/chat>) in November 2022 has put the world on notice as to how these emerging tools can be easily accessed and provide instantaneous responses in a conversation-type format. This form of GAIT is not entirely new, with other predecessors such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home, or other chatbots, that already provide some form of human-computer interactions built on simple commands such as switching lights on/off, or queries about the weather for the coming week for instance. However, the ease with which ChatGPT can be utilised over time and space has stirred up fundamental epistemological and ontological debates, especially when it can easily churn out 'solutions' to questions, without the human user possibly having to read, review or reflect on the domain or subject matter. As a free software, ChatGPT recorded a million users within a week of its launch at the end of 2022 (Ruby, 2022). There are reported instances where ChatGPT has reached user capacity (see Jones, 2022), and its meteoric rise is anticipated to bring its owners US\$200 million in revenue from licensing of text and images for developers in 2023 (Dastin et al., 2022).

However, detractors of GAIT, especially in the form of ChatGPT raise serious concerns about its ethics and the ease with which contents can be generated, without necessarily being authenticated or verified (Chatterjee, Dethlefs, 2023; Dowling, Lucey, 2023). ChatGPT has also suddenly crept up onto the education landscape, and even institutions delivering tourism education, as well as other disciplines, are increasingly developing policies and guidelines, or altering their assessment tasks to confront the threat of academic integrity posed by ChatGPT (King, 2023). Despite these shortcomings, GAIT does present other benefits in simplifying and expediting copious amounts of information into chunks of knowledge that can assist and inform business decisions, even in a tourism context (Go et al., 2020). After all, the tourism industry has numerous stakeholders in an ecosystem, each of which interoperates with one another and as such, having GAIT can have inherent benefits to reducing inefficiencies and ineffectiveness within the experience economy (Goel et al., 2022). The ubiquitous growth of information technologies in tourism reflects the new waves of digital tools entering service industries and disrupting the landscape to feature human-computer co-creation and design of experiences (Pencarelli, 2020). Examples of such technological developments include digital marketing, social media, virtual reality, robots, and smart tourism, leading to what Stankov and Gretzel (2020) characterise as Tourism 4.0.

Yet, the key question then, for the tourism fraternity, is how do GAIT such as ChatGPT benefit the education landscape? Then, by extension, do the contents generated by ChatGPT reveal any innovative or revolutionary ideas to enhance tourism theory, or practice? To address the extant body of work (or lack thereof), this paper traces the dialogue with ChatGPT using responsible tourism education as the context of analysis and illustrates what is revealed by ChatGPT over a series of questions. The findings are then discussed before the paper concludes with implications for future engagements with this GAIT tool, or other subsequent iterations.

Responsible tourism

The choice of employing responsible tourism education as the context for investigation is prompted by increasing calls for the sector to go beyond pure hedonistic purposes and instead, engage in co-creating experiences that are ethical, sustainable, and regenerative to local com-

munities and environments (Camilleri, 2016; Mathew, M, 2022; Saganic, Favro, 2008; Vukovic et al., 2019). Responsible tourism education espouses the need for tourists, operators, communities, governments, and other stakeholders to reflect on individual and collective actions that give back to the destinations where tourism is engaged, experienced and for long-term futures (Burrai et al., 2019; Horvath, Jonas-Berki, 2018; Mondal, Samaddar, 2021). The responsible tourism mandate is especially foregrounded throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as global destinations were afforded a disruptive pause to consider how they can 'build back better' and create more desirable futures (Cheer et al., 2021). For this reason, the adoption of responsible tourism education is a contemporary and justified choice to locate ChatGPT and how it responds to the topic. Crucially, the research aims and scopes are devoted to understanding how the evolution and criticality of responsible tourism has been framed within AI tools such as ChatGPT, and critically evaluating the contents to the principles and nomenclature of what has been written about the subject previously.

Methods and data

Following the instructions on how best to engage on the ChatGPT GAIT platform, a series of questions related to responsible tourism education were posed to the chatbot on 19 July 2023. Almost instantaneously, responses from ChatGPT were obtained. All the verbatim data was subsequently stored using Microsoft Word to provide a sequential order of what questions were asked, and how ChatGPT responded. This data would form the basis for the findings and discussion within this paper. This process is consistent with how other scholars across different disciplines have engaged with ChatGPT (Mann, 2023; Pavlik, 2023). Then, following previous studies (inter alia Gregory et al., 2022; Miller, 2018, Rather, 2024; Sampsel, 2018), text and sentiment analysis was conducted using freely available software such as SpeakAI and Voyant to derive a coherent structure and approach to investigate the data towards the research question of interest. In comparison to previous studies, this research focused on the topic of responsible tourism within ChatGPT, and undertook text and sentiment analysis to address calls from extant literature on expanding the body of knowledge surrounding such technologies (Dogra, 2024; Jeong, Lee, 2024; Shin, Kang, 2023).

Results

The subsequent transcript is presented without any edits based on a conversation with ChatGPT on responsible tourism education.

Researcher: What is the future of responsible tourism education?

ChatGPT: The future of responsible tourism education is likely to involve a greater focus on sustainability, community engagement, and cultural preservation. Some possible developments in this area include increased use of eco-friendly accommodations and transportation, more opportunities for local people to benefit economically from tourism, and more educational and interpretive activities that help visitors understand and appreciate the cultural and environmental heritage of the places they visit. Additionally, there is likely to be a growing awareness and interest in the impact of tourism on local communities, and efforts to minimise negative effects and maximise positive contributions.

Researcher: Where are we likely to see responsible tourism education flourish in the next few years?

ChatGPT: Responsible tourism education is likely to flourish in a variety of locations around the world in the next few years. Some specific areas where it may be particularly successful include:

Developing countries: Responsible tourism education has the potential to bring economic and social benefits to communities in developing countries, and many organisations and governments are working to promote sustainable tourism in these areas.

Protected areas: Responsible tourism education can be a valuable tool for the conservation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage sites. Many protected areas around the world are working to develop sustainable tourism programs that educate visitors and benefit local communities.

Urban areas: Responsible tourism education can also be applied in urban areas, where it can promote cultural and historical preservation, while also fostering sustainable economic development.

Adventure Tourism: Adventure tourism is another area where responsible tourism education is likely to flourish in the next few years. Adventure tourism operators are increasingly becoming more environmentally and socially responsible to meet the demands of eco-conscious travellers.

Community-based tourism: Community-based tourism is another area where responsible tourism education is likely to flourish in the next few years. Community-based tourism is a way of involving local communities in the tourism sector and benefiting them directly from it.

Rural areas: Rural areas are also likely to see responsible tourism flourish in the next few years, as more and more travellers seek out authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences that are less crowded and more connected to nature and local culture.

Overall, responsible tourism education is a growing trend in the industry, and it is expected to gain more momentum in the coming years.

Researcher: Which countries are world leaders in responsible tourism education and practice?

ChatGPT: There are several countries that are considered world leaders in responsible tourism education and practice, including:

Costa Rica: Costa Rica has a long-standing reputation for sustainable tourism and is recognised for its focus on ecotourism and conservation. The country has successfully protected large areas of rainforest and other natural habitats, and many of its tourism activities are designed to educate visitors about the country's rich biodiversity.

Bhutan: Bhutan is known for its commitment to sustainable development and preservation of cultural heritage. The country has a "high value, low impact" tourism policy, which focuses on educating visitors about Bhutan's unique culture and environment.

Iceland: Iceland has a strong focus on sustainable tourism and is known for its efforts to minimise the impact of tourism on the country's fragile natural environment. Iceland also encourages sustainable transportation and accommodation options, as well as activities that promote sustainable tourism.

New Zealand: New Zealand has a growing reputation for sustainable tourism, with a particular focus on eco-friendly accommodation and activities that promote conservation and cultural preservation.

Australia: Australia has a strong focus on sustainable tourism and has been recognised for its efforts to protect its unique natural and cultural heritage, including the Great Barrier Reef, and the Great Ocean Road.

Norway: Norway is known for its sustainable and responsible tourism practices, with a focus on preserving its natural and cultural heritage, as well as promoting sustainable transportation and accommodation options.

Ecuador: Ecuador is a leader in responsible tourism, with a focus on preserving its rich biodiversity, and promoting sustainable tourism activities in the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon rainforest, and the Andes.

These are just a few examples of countries that are considered world leaders in responsible tourism education and practice, and there are many other destinations around the world that are making significant efforts to promote sustainable tourism practices.

Researcher: How should responsible tourism indicators be developed?

ChatGPT: Responsible tourism indicators should be developed through a process that involves input from a variety of stakeholders, including government agencies, industry organisations, local communities, and other interested parties. The process should also be based on a thorough understanding of the local context, including the cultural, environmental, and economic conditions of the destination.

Here are a few key steps that can be followed when developing responsible tourism indicators:

Identify the key issues: The first step in developing responsible tourism indicators is to identify the key issues that need to be addressed in a particular destination. This might include issues related to environmental protection, cultural preservation, community engagement, and economic development.

Conduct a baseline assessment: Once the key issues have been identified, a baseline assessment should be conducted to determine the current state of responsible tourism in the destination. This assessment should include data collection and analysis, as well as stakeholder engagement.

Develop the indicators: Based on the results of the baseline assessment, specific indicators should be developed that will help measure progress in addressing the key issues. Indicators should be measurable, meaningful, and relevant to the local context.

Implement and monitor: Once the indicators have been developed, they should be implemented and monitored over time to track progress in addressing the key issues. Data should be collected and analysed regularly, and the indicators should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Communicate and involve stakeholders: The responsible tourism indicators should be communicated and shared with all stakeholders, including government agencies, industry organisations, local communities, and other interested parties. Stakeholders should be involved in the process of monitoring and evaluating the indicators, and their feedback should be considered when updating the indicators.

It's important to note that responsible tourism indicators are not only useful for measuring progress but also for identifying areas where improvements can be made and for supporting the development and implementation of sustainable tourism policies and strategies.

Researcher: How can we involve women, children, and ethnic and marginalised communities in responsible tourism education?

ChatGPT: There are several ways to involve women, children, and ethnic and marginalized communities in responsible tourism education:

Community engagement: Communities should be actively engaged in the planning, development, and management of tourism activities in their area. This can be done through community consultations, focus groups, and other forms of stakeholder engagement.

Empowerment and training: Providing training and education opportunities can help empower women, children, and ethnic and marginalised communities to participate in the tourism sector and benefit from it.

Job creation: Tourism can create job opportunities for women, children, and ethnic and marginalised communities. This can be done by involving these communities in activities such as tour guiding, providing accommodation, and food and beverage services.

Fair trade: Fair trade principles and practices can ensure that the benefits of tourism reach marginalised communities and that they are treated fairly and with respect.

Cultural sensitivity: Tourism activities should be designed and implemented in a way that is sensitive to the culture and traditions of the local communities. This can help to promote mutual understanding and respect between tourists and residents.

Education and Interpretation: Educational and interpretive activities such as storytelling, traditional art, and cultural performances can be used to educate visitors about the culture and heritage of marginalised communities.

Micro-entrepreneurship: Encourage and support local people, particularly women and marginalised communities, to start their own tourism-related businesses such as homestays, local tour guides, and food and craft vendors.

Responsible procurement: Encourage responsible procurement practices that support local communities, particularly marginalised communities, by purchasing goods and services from them.

By involving women, children, ethnic and marginalised communities in responsible tourism education, the benefits of tourism can be more widely shared and contribute to the sustainable development of local communities.

Researcher: What are the barriers to responsible tourism education development?

ChatGPT: There are several barriers to responsible tourism education development, including:

Lack of awareness and understanding: Many tourism operators, governments, and local communities may not be aware of the concept of responsible tourism or understand its potential benefits. This can make it difficult to develop and implement sustainable tourism practices.

Financial constraints: Developing and implementing sustainable tourism practices can be costly, and many tourism operators, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), may not have the resources to invest in these practices.

Regulatory barriers: In some cases, government regulations may not be conducive to responsible tourism education development. For example, zoning laws or building codes may not allow for the development of eco-friendly accommodations or transportation.

Short-term thinking: Tourism can be a significant source of revenue for many destinations, and some governments and tourism operators may prioritise short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability.

Resistance to change: Changing established tourism practices can be difficult, and some operators may be resistant to adopting new, sustainable approaches.

Lack of data and research: Without adequate data and research, it can be difficult to understand the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism and design appropriate sustainable tourism strategies.

Lack of coordination: Responsible tourism education development requires coordination between different stakeholders, including governments, local communities, and the private sector. However, a lack of coordination can make it difficult to develop and implement sustainable tourism practices.

Lack of accountability and monitoring: Without adequate accountability and monitoring mechanisms, it can be difficult to measure the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices and identify areas for improvement.

These barriers can be addressed by raising awareness and understanding of responsible tourism, providing financial and technical assistance, implementing supportive policies and regulations, encouraging long-term thinking, fostering a culture of innovation, investing in education, research and data collection, promoting coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, and implementing accountability and monitoring mechanisms.

Researcher: How much does it cost to become a responsible tourism destination?

ChatGPT: The cost of becoming a responsible tourism destination can vary greatly depending on a variety of factors, including the destination's current level of sustainability, the types of sustainable tourism practices that are being implemented, and the resources available to invest in these practices. Some examples of costs that may be associated with becoming a responsible tourism destination include:

Staff training and education: Providing training and education to staff and local communities on sustainable tourism practices can be an important cost associated with becoming a responsible tourism destination.

Environmental assessments: Conducting environmental assessments to identify potential impacts of tourism and develop strategies to minimize them may also be a significant cost.

Infrastructure development: Implementing sustainable infrastructure, such as waste management systems, renewable energy sources, and eco-friendly transportation options, can be costly.

Marketing and promotion: Promoting a destination as a responsible tourism destination can also be costly, as it may require additional marketing and promotional efforts.

Monitoring and evaluation: Implementing monitoring and evaluation systems to track the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism and measure the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices can also be costly.

Certifications and accreditation: Participating in certification and accreditation programs such as Green Globe, Travelife, or Biosphere can also be costly, as they often require fees and ongoing audits.

It's worth noting that while responsible tourism may have an initial cost, it can bring long-term benefits such as attracting sustainable-minded travellers, reducing environmental and social impacts, and supporting local communities. Moreover, responsible tourism can also bring cost savings in the long run by reducing the need for costly repairs and replacements, reducing the use of resources, and increasing the efficiency of operations.

Discussion

The transcript with ChatGPT on issues related to responsible tourism reveals some areas of similarity with extant literature, though there were other points of difference in terms of illuminating nuanced insights into the topic. These outcomes are summarised in Table 1 and compared with previous studies.

Table 1. ChatGPT outcomes as compared to previous studies on responsible tourism education

ChatGPT themes	Similar to	Contributions
Greater community engagement	Camilleri, 2016; Mathew, M, 2022; Mondal, Samaddar, 2021	
Development in emerging countries	Eyisi et al., 2023; Stoffelen et al., 2020	
Tool for poverty alleviation	Giampiccoli, Saayman, 2017	
Shortlisting of countries that are responsible tourism exemplars		Identification of destinations that are perhaps lesser-known exemplars of responsible tourism
Steps in developing responsible tourism indicators	Gong et al., 2019; Um, Yoon, 2021	Illuminates other variables that need to be incorporated to develop future indicators
Ways to involve women, children, and other minority groups	Burrai et al., 2019; Seraphin et al., 2022	
Barriers to responsible tourism education and development	Carasuk et al., 2016	
Costs associated with responsible tourism development		Other than financial costs, other psychological (e.g., mindset) costs need to be addressed

It is acknowledged that ChatGPT was built and developed on the back of resources accessed before 2022, though some of its predictions and assertions mimic what academic literature has demonstrated in terms of the body of knowledge surrounding responsible tourism education, as illustrated in Table 1. Nevertheless, there are some contemporary issues that ChatGPT has identified and extended beyond what has been discussed within extant literature, and thereby formulating valuable research propositions that can be tested in future studies.

Then, by using freely available text analysis tools such as [SpeakAI](#) and [Voyant](#), the transcript with ChatGPT led to the following illustrations:

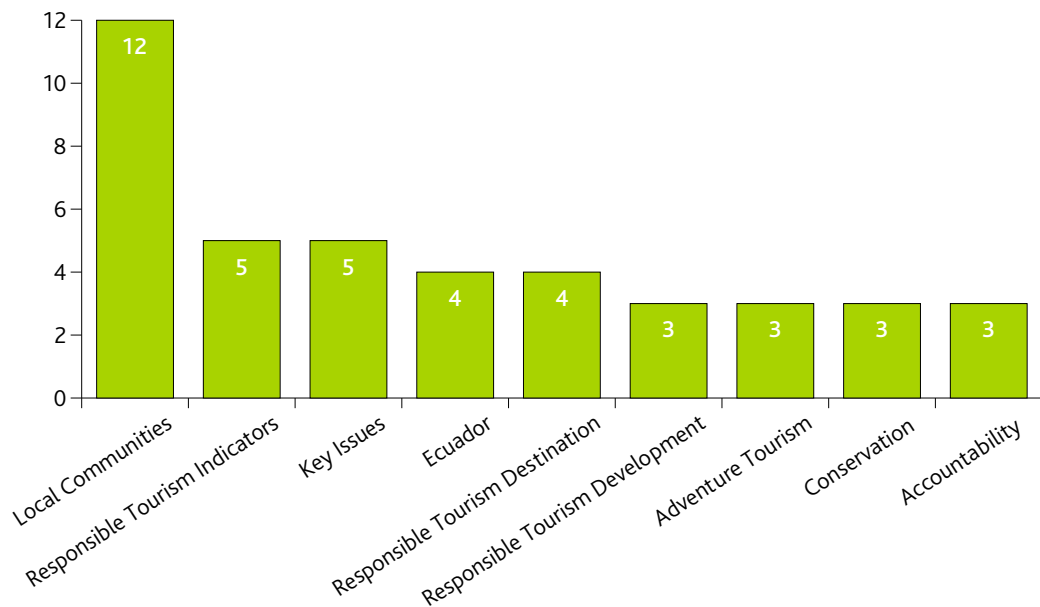


Figure 1. Top words revealed by ChatGPT towards responsible tourism education probing questions

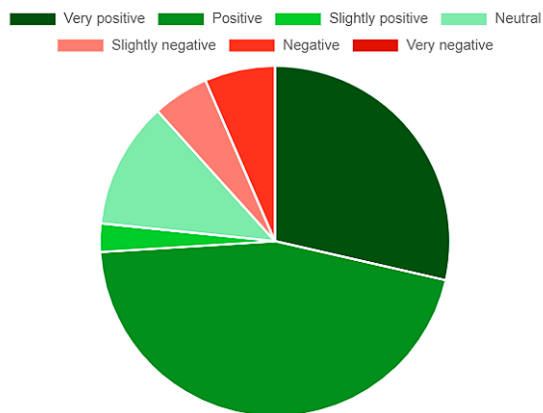


Figure 2. ChatGPT and overall sentiment toward responsible tourism education

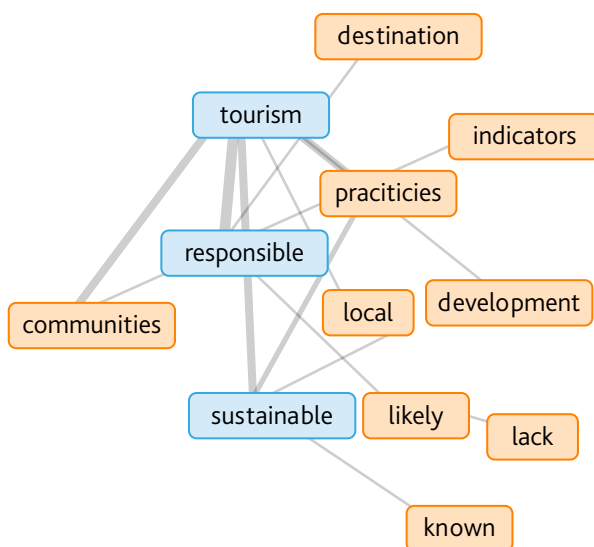


Figure 3. Responsible tourism education keyword network among other terms

Figure 1 provides some valuable insights on keywords derived from ChatGPT regarding responsible tourism education. While there is a particular focus on local communities, there are also calls for indicator development and having fair outcomes, and for greater accountability to the stakeholders. Figure 2 also indicates that the vast majority of ChatGPT contents appear to be positive sentiments framed around responsible tourism education, but there is still close to 1/8 of the contents that appear negative. This should be picked up on and analysed as to why this is the case. Finally, Figure 3 also reveals that there could be a lack of sustainable outcomes to responsible tourism education, possibly related to unclear governance, resources, or codes of conduct to regulate responsible tourism in action.

Nonetheless, within the discussions around the future of responsible tourism education, sectors that would witness responsible tourism education and developments, and destinations that appear to possess best practices, can appear to be written from the perspectives of a tourism researcher, and supported by prior studies (e.g., Carasuk et al., 2016; Mihalic, 2016). Like-

wise, suggestions as to the development of responsible tourism indicators, and ways to engage with other groups such as women, children, or marginalised groups, are also consistent in reflecting what other previous studies have alluded to (see for instance Eyisi et al., 2023; Samaddar et al., 2022; Seraphin et al., 2022). However, the points presented appear rather generic and broad, which do not necessarily elucidate deeper reflections of indicator types such as quality of life indices, or other tools that may be contextualised to measure responsible tourism education across different destinations. This outcome supports the claims of other scholars (e.g., Ivanov, Soliman, 2023; Skavronskaya et al., 2023), who argued that ChatGPT is not yet able to synthesise and advance cognitive mental schemas to produce radical work to advance knowledge. ChatGPT generates responses based on human inputs to its GAIT environment, and this is reflected in terms of the critical review of how to address responsible tourism education barriers, and how the benefits outweigh the costs of undertaking responsible tourism education in the long term.

The strengths of ChatGPT can therefore be ascribed to the speed in which it can compile a range of insights about a relevant topic (responsible tourism in this context) and generate quick responses towards given prompts, as alluded to by Carvalho and Ivanov (2024) and Nautiyal et al. (2023). The insights from ChatGPT can also be used to validate certain propositions, as Figures 1 and 3 show how keywords are consistent with academic literature and other dominant concepts (Ali, 2023, Mich, Garigliano, 2023). Then, by extending the content analysis to ChatGPT, the findings reveal a positive sentiment toward responsible tourism education, as indicated in Figure 2. This shows some level of alignment between what academic literature has posited, and the GAIT algorithm that has coalesced outcomes to consensus regarding responsible tourism education.

Overall, ChatGPT reinforces what we already know about responsible tourism education. It echoes what we know about the topic of integrating closer connections with local communities, taking a leaf off best practices in some countries, and identifying steps for how we can support stakeholders such as women, children, and marginalised groups towards action-oriented outcomes. However, what we don't yet know from ChatGPT is contextual factors that shape indicators for responsible tourism education success. This reiterates that ChatGPT, like other forms of GAIT, is premised upon human inputs, and is no substitute for creativity and critical reflection (Iskender, 2023).

In summary, whilst ChatGPT can deliver quick responses to queries associated with topics like responsible tourism education, there remain gaps as to innovative or radical responses to advance theory and practice. It is therefore argued that ChatGPT should not be solely relied on to advance responsible tourism education knowledge, and instead provide a quick snapshot of what key themes exist, and for humans to leverage on such knowledge to conduct further research. Overall, the engagement with ChatGPT has led to the development of Figure 4, depicting a ChatGPT framework for tourism education research. This framework extends the work of other scholars (e.g., Carvalho, Ivanov, 2024; Ivanov, Soliman, 2023) in conceptualising how ChatGPT can be mapped onto different parts of the tourism education research journey, acting as either a complementary tool to answer the research questions, or as the primary source in which to test AI's response towards given prompts.

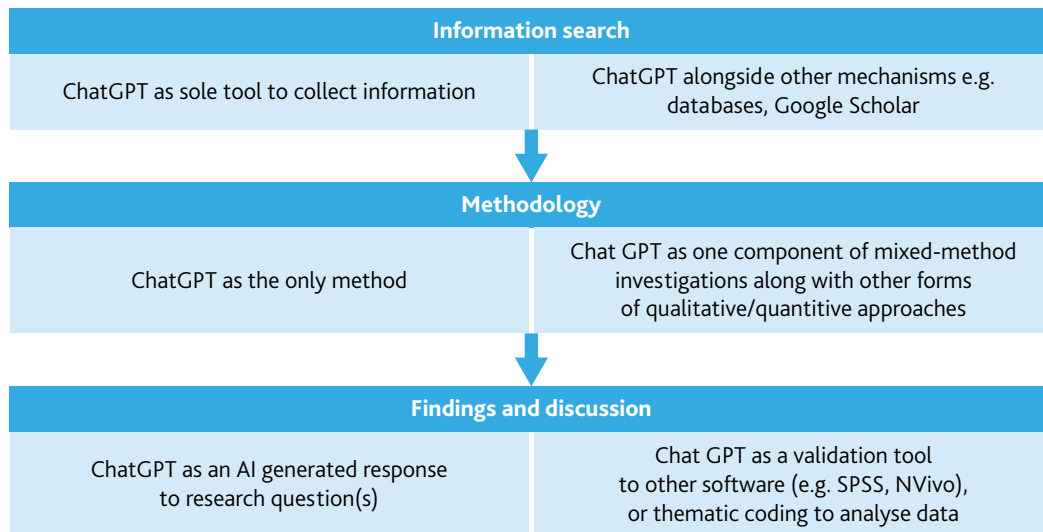


Figure 4. A ChatGPT framework for tourism education research

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper sought to reveal how to engage with ChatGPT in a tourism academic landscape, and what the GAIT platform reveals through a series of question prompts. The results suggest that most of the outcomes are consistent with prior studies, which can be explained by how ChatGPT is informed by humans providing the knowledge upon which GAIT is undertaken. Crucially, this paper reveals that innovative, or radical outcomes to responsible tourism education futures and measures will still require human effort to design and implement.

The paper is not without its limitations. It is drawn from one point in time, and so subsequent engagements with ChatGPT in the future could reveal similar or different outcomes. As AI continually evolves, the outcomes of this opinion piece would likely differ when conducted at some point in the future. Another limitation is that the paper is focused on a single topic of responsible tourism education, and so other more established topics such as marketing education may illuminate more nuanced insights. Finally, the paper is limited to a single chatbot - ChatGPT, whereas other GAIT tools such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home could perhaps articulate varied outcomes. These limitations notwithstanding, the paper helps steer avenues for future investigation.

Future studies may seek to test the propositions raised by ChatGPT with empirical insights across destinations and stakeholder groups. These could be undertaken using primary data collection methods such as interviews or questionnaires. Other scholars can likewise advance the current body of GAIT in tourism education through different lines of questioning and examine if there are structural inequalities related to knowledge creation and dissemination across various parts of the world due to language differences. Overall, this paper has provided critical reflections as to how engagement with ChatGPT, or other chatbots, can help to expedite knowledge generation and reach diverse audiences, in a simple, but powerful manner within tourism education.

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