

# The Concept of Post-humanism and Its Reflections on Tourism Education

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## Abstract

*The aim of this manuscript is to investigate the influence the impacts of post-humanism on tourism education. The paper will start with a body of literature on post-humanism based on the previous studies and debates in the academia. The methodology will be literature review and critical evaluation of the findings. As a conclusion, the study suggests that the Post-humanist reflection in tourism education will contribute positively to the tourism sector, specifically regarding to sustainability issues. The manuscript will also suggest a model in order to provide a quantitative analysis for the post-humanism, including the technological advancements and environmental regeneration variables, along with possible economic and social impacts. In short, establishment of a tourism education that considerably pays attention to the benefits of post-humanism will be essential for functionality and effectiveness of tourism practice in the future.*

**Keywords:** *Post-humanism, humanism, tourism, education*

## Introduction

The understanding of human is subject to change across time. Historically, humanism came up parallel to the Renaissance movement in 15<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizing the dignity of human-beings, and their value and agency. In order to explain growing human impacts on environment in today's world, the term Anthropocene was coined in the beginning of 2000s by Nobel Prize winner chemist Paul Crutzen, who emphasizes the hegemony of humans over nature. Although various methods that

underline empirical or theoretical aspects for different purposes have been carried out in human education and pedagogy within the course of history, the current Anthropocene shapes the purpose of education in a way that education should focus on cultural modification between communities and across generations, and it is responsible for transforming the spaces and practices to maintain the adaptation of humans to their social structures (Robbins, 2013; Lloro-Bidart, 2015:132). The purpose of education may include the development of adaptive behaviors, especially considering the long-lasting impact of Evolution by Charles Darwin, and underlying objective of education may be presented as developing social skills that will allow humans to survive in societies, which is the new nature in the age of human domination over nature.

Nevertheless, placing the human center in the world has caused various problems, such as environmental degradation and maltreatment for other living species, therefore recent critiques have been put the ultimate importance of human to the target in order to re-evaluate the possible impact of human to the environment. In this respect, one of the most significant critiques is provided by post-humanism, which refers to a state beyond being a human. From this point of view, post-humanism plays a crucial role on the understanding that solely relies on the assumption of “perfect human” which is the target of all social policies, educational systems, and naturally, touristic services.

### **Evaluation of post-humanism on anthropocentrism**

In order to grasp the philosophy behind post-humanism, it is necessary to understand first the perspective of anthropocentrism, and specifically its conceptualization of nature-human relationship. Based on reconsidering what is “human” while conceptualizing the nature with its complexity of human and non-human elements, post-humanist vocabulary has begun to develop (Fenwick & Landri, 2012:4). Initially, the focus was on a human-centric perception and the whole epistemology has built onto an anthropocentric standpoint that put human-beings at first place. Back to the Enlightenment philosophical traditions, the dominant idea in Western formal education ensures “becoming human” that stresses on improving particular cognitive, social and moral capabilities (Pedersen, 2010:237). Although this focus has resulted in various achievements in different domains such as, scientific investigations, artistic products or literature masterpieces, the overall result was the prioritization and domination of human over other species.

The reflections are even more severe in some instances, such as the industrial animal production where animals are slaughtered arbitrarily or kept in smaller cages in unnatural conditions in order to provide people meat or dairy products. Deforestation of certain destinations to build touristic facilities as hotels, beaches etc.

and also fail to collaborate with local governments to overcome with water, air or land pollution due to the activities of these tourism agencies can be considered as clear examples of existing human-centered point of view in tourism activity. Considering the fact that tourism is heavily relied on environmental sustainability, since the main aim of tourists is to refrain from grey context of cities and spend some time within nature, either in a form of forests, mountains, etc. or within sea and sand concept, unless it is a cultural tourism activity in a completely artificial set up such as museum tourism. In short, protection of environment would allow tourism sector to maintain tourism activity as an economic source for the future periods.

Pursuing this further, according to anthropocentric point of view, humans used to be closer to the nature, but currently the life of humankind is unnatural and distant from nature, therefore proximity to nature is about learning in the course of education (Rautio, 2013). As a natural outcome of the point of view that humans are not nature, the question whether humans are more or less nature, connected to or disconnected from the nature, superior to or dominant over nature come to the stage (Malone, 2016). The development of settlements in urban life is one of the main causes for such a disparity. In the previous times, humans were living within the natural environment and they are connected with other elements in the environment. Currently, their interactions are restricted to a few non-human beings that are capable of living in the city conditions such as dogs, cats, some birds, some trees for decoration, and so on. Moreover, the residents of cities cannot involve in production of certain goods such as food, clothing, etc. and they only stand as “consumers” in a long production chain. For that reason, urban settlers lack experience with other natural aspects in the environment, they only interact with other people in social relationships, and therefore they perceive nature as composed of humans and other natural entities which are responsible for serving them. The activity of tourism plays a significant role in this sense, as tourism provides an opportunity for city residents to change their environment for a period, where they may engage in interactions with other natural beings, which will increase the likelihood for them to considered humans as something outside of nature.

In contrast to anthropocentrism, post-humanism enables the mutual existence of human beings in the nature with other type of species, where humans are sharing the resources in the form of coexistence and mutual dependence without being the masters of nature (Wang, 2018). Anthropogenic privileges of humankind, anthropocentric epistemology and humanistic ontology have become the subject of change in the course of post-humanistic transformation led by techno-scientific progress, and the importance of human is substituted by new concepts such as sustainable forms of production, recycling, environmental protection for co-existence, and so on (Marchesini, 2015; Ferrando, 2016). Especially after the developments in animal

research (Fenwick & Landri, 2012:5) animals begin to be perceived as “valuable” as human-beings, as they were previously perceived as mere objects. In general, the shift from anthropocentrism to post-humanism has occurred in various domains, as people acknowledge the inadequacy of humans and start to question the omnipotence of human-beings in nature.

Nevertheless, post-humanism do not refer to “anti”-humanism, since the claim of post-humanism is based on constant questioning of human-centric activities (Edwards, 2010) rather than minimizing the importance of humans by degrading their value in the nature. Humans are valuable agents of the world, they have equal importance with other elements within the nature, and they have a capacity to repair the adverse impact of their activities and prevent other elements from other possible future influences. For this reason, human-beings are the important part of post-humanism since they are capable of limiting their power if educated in a respectful manner to other components of nature.

The doubt for anthropocentrism by questioning the so-called “essential” binary between human and non-human forms the basis of post-humanism in the educational context, including tourism as well (Taylor, 2016). Furthermore, post-humanistic educational philosophy is not only concerned with how human and non-human complexity influences the educational practices, but it also points out the open spaces for possible changes, as the previous “matters of fact” is now replaced with “matters of concern”, which prioritize the co-existence of human with other natural entities with respect to growing impact of nature-related problems such as global warming, natural catastrophes, and so on (Fenwick & Landri, 2012:4).

As anthropocentric philosophy behind the tourism education gives its way to post-humanist approach, that considers the development of technology and the sustainability of environment, the effectiveness of tourism will be more likely to increase at a global scale. To achieve this, policies need to consider the educational aspects of tourism, since the future of tourism services will be in the hands of current young generations, and an educational background emphasizing the value of post-humanism will guarantee the maintenance of technological development and environmental protection.

### **Modeling the Effectiveness of Post-Humanist Tourism Education**

Development of technology and mechanization plays an essential role for the post-humanism. Through mechanization, individuals would be more likely to question the importance of humanity on the world (Wang, 2018), since if the human beings can be substituted by machines, there will be no need to place the humans in the center of universe. Post-humanistic approach not only reminds human-being that they are not superior or irreplaceable but it also draws attention to ability of human mind to engage

in beyond human developments, as in the case of technological progress, that will ease the life for all. Specific to tourism sector, the focus on technological advancements has increased the volume of touristic activity, varying from technological applications in accommodation to the use of internet, navigational devices and social media to arrange every single detail for a decent or affordable holiday. Thus, technological advancement appears as an important determinant for the effectiveness of post-humanist tourism.

Apart from technology, environmental sustainability creates an important part of post-humanist approach, as it refutes the anthropocentric idea that nature is at the service of human use, and rather it emphasizes the environmental protection through sustainable tourism policies, that secures the nature for future generations. Protection of nature provides a healthy environment for every resident in a particular destination, increases the quality of life and maintains the economic activity of tourism. As previously discussed in detail, the fundamental change in the understanding of environment requires the co-existence of human with other elements in the nature, hence the sustainability of environment through environmental regeneration that refers to a reparation process of nature after persistent devastating impact of human-centric tourism activities. For that reason, the environmental regeneration is another factor for explaining the effect of post-humanist tourism.

Hence, the model can be considered as:

$$PTE = \beta_1 TA^t + \beta_2 ER^t + \varepsilon$$

Where,

PTE implies *Post-humanist Tourism Effectiveness*

TA implies *the technological advancement*

ER implies the *Environmental Regeneration*

t implies *time* (or periods/seasons in which touristic markets work)

$\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  imply coefficients

$\varepsilon$  implies residual

In general, the effectiveness of post-humanist tourism can be measured through two main variables, namely the improvements in technology and the rate of environmental regeneration. Beside this, there may be other variables that can explain the variance in the effectiveness of post-humanist tourism education that this model has not captured. For that reason, a residual is presented in the model, which denotes the variance that cannot be explained by the three main variables.

Additionally, this model is suitable for any kind of numerical data since the aim of this suggested model is to measure the impact of post-humanist tourism education

in a quantitative manner. By modeling the effectiveness of post-humanist education in tourism with respect to two main variables, the research allows the measurement through statistical analysis and a mathematical structure for investigation rather than subjective methods which decrease the objectivity and reliability of findings.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, post-humanism can be understood as response to inability of anthropocentrism to maintain pluralism, tolerance and equity for all in the natural environment; however it is limited in terms of explaining the ways for multiple interactions between cultural and natural or organic and inorganic domains (Whatmore, 2004; Pedersen, 2010:242). Some scholars have even claimed that post-humanism is a product of human, and the goals suggested by this tradition cannot be achieved in current global economic and political context (Braidotti, 2006). Nevertheless, this manuscript acknowledges the fact that post-humanist point of view has provided an important critique for a human-centric understanding of nature that lasts for more than 600 years in art, literature, science, philosophy as well as economic and political decisions. The contributions of post-humanism can be expanded via educational formation, and topics related to natural sustainability and co-existence may gain prominence rather than human-centric, self-interested, profit-oriented social mechanism.

Results suggest that post-humanist tourism education leads to growing emphasize on the development of technology as well as it increases the concerns on environmental degradation. The future of today's world, and maintenance of economic activities are dependent on technological progress and availability of a healthy environment. For this reason, replacing anthropocentric world view with a sustainable approach that gives equal importance for all species in the world will provide healthier environment across generations, and education plays a significant role in terms of transferring the consciousness achieved by post-humanist questioning of human-centric world setting. As mentioned previously, environmental protection is not a choice but rather a necessity for the sustainability of tourism activity. If tourism education includes the environmental concerns posed by post-humanistic point of view, local stakeholders in tourism activities as well as those who are responsible for creating policies for the development of tourism will be more careful about environmental burden, and a sustainable future will be achieved for all elements of nature. All in all, the nature belongs to all of living creatures, but human-beings have an extra responsibility, that is, to maintain the co-existence within the nature as a part of it.

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