

Green tourism: Reducing the carbon footprint of holidaymakers

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Each year our desire to get away from it all contributes to around 5% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. Ignoring the impact of tourism on the environment would be equivalent to ignoring the carbon emissions of a developed industrialised nation.

This is why Dr Janet Dickinson and Dr Viachaslau Filimonau from Bournemouth University's School of Tourism are working on ways to reduce the carbon footprint of holidaymakers.

Rather than developing punitive taxes or penalties, the research is looking at how to give people good incentives and strategies to cut down on unnecessary travel.

The BU team is starting close to home by studying the behaviour of holidaymakers at a Dorset campsite, where up to 300 people stay each week during the summer peak season.

"The aim is to try to revolutionise the travel decision making process," says Dr Janet Dickinson, senior lecturer in BU's School of Tourism.

"The idea is to give people visibility of transport options in their immediate future through [social networking](#) and through smart phones so they can see there are opportunities to share transport, or opportunities to avoid making journeys," she says.

The study is part of a wider Sixth Sense Transport Project – a

collaboration between BU and colleagues from the Universities of Southampton, Lancaster, Edinburgh and Salford.

"We are looking at a campsite, but the same approach could be used in any holiday community – a hotel, group of cottages or caravan park," Dr Dickinson explains.

"You have a community in the same place often all doing things at the same time and there's a huge potential for people to make better use of travel resources. You have an awful lot of congestion in the areas linked to tourism."

The idea is to use social networks so people can reveal anonymously to their fellow campers where they are and what they are doing. At the same time they can see what everyone else on the campsite is up to, what their immediate plans are, and what the weather and travel conditions are like.

"If you are heading to the beach tomorrow, and you know 50 other people are too, it allows you to make contact and share travel – or find out about bus routes – or warn of congestion. You might need just one item from the shops – and this could allow you to ask someone already at the shops or heading off there to pick it up for you," suggests Dr Dickinson.

The project is first assessing holidaymaker's attitudes to sharing. The team are finding out more about holidaymaker's habits, what sort of information they are willing to share and how prepared they are to join forces.

Then they will experiment with real life holidaymakers at the campsite, inviting them to try out smart phone applications designed to help them on their break.

Other parts of the project are looking at social networking in schools – to help parents share transport to school and promote 'walking buses' – supervised groups of children walking to school on predetermined routes.

Another is looking at reducing the [carbon footprint](#) of the logistics industry – the moving around of goods by lorry and train.

"The project is not about developing an application for a smart phone, but finding out about people's travel decision making and whether their behaviour can be changed if they realise 200 other people living alongside them are about to make the same journey."

Provided by Bournemouth University

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