

Building literacy to reduce tourism's carbon footprint

Upskilling Irish tourism for a decarbonised world
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Credit to my colleagues A/Prof Alexandra Coghlan and Dr Stefen Macaskill

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Why tourism?

- Large industry globally, 1 in 10 jobs
- Contributes 5-8% of global man-made greenhouse gas emissions
- Cuts across the economy and public sector
- Offers a massive opportunity to engage people
- Can it be a vehicle for change?

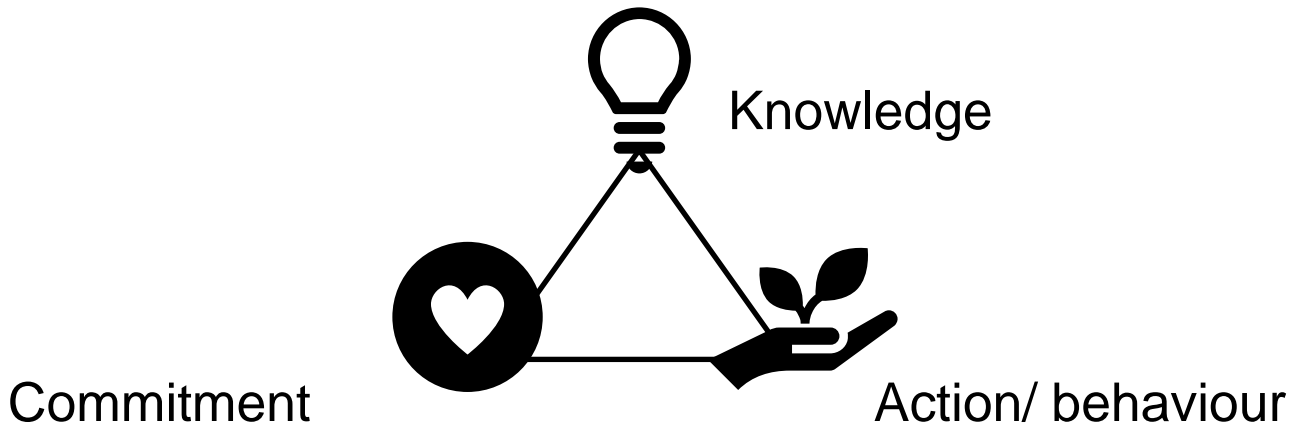
Most sustainability research and practice focuses on technology and management

- The role of staff/tourism workforce in the sustainable transition is under-explored and under-valued.
- Sheldon (2020) proposes *“that employees are crucial in the creation of personalized transformational experiences for tourists. Their knowledge, skills and values can co-create the visitors' transformative experiences”*.



Building literacy

United Nations – defines Sustainability Literacy as “the knowledge, skills and mindsets that allow individuals to become deeply committed to building a sustainable future and assisting in making informed and effective decisions to this end”.

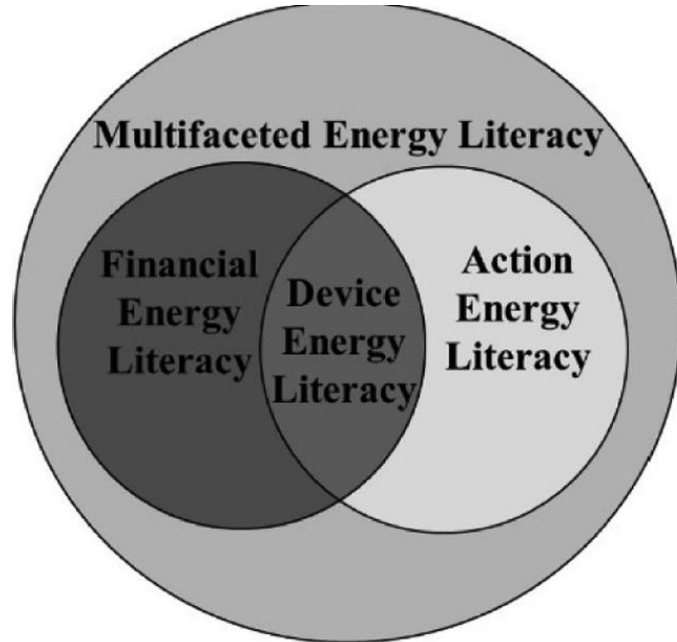


What type of knowledge and skills?



Household energy literacy: A critical review and a conceptual typology

Karlijn L. van den Broek^{a,b,*}



Energy action literacy



Training

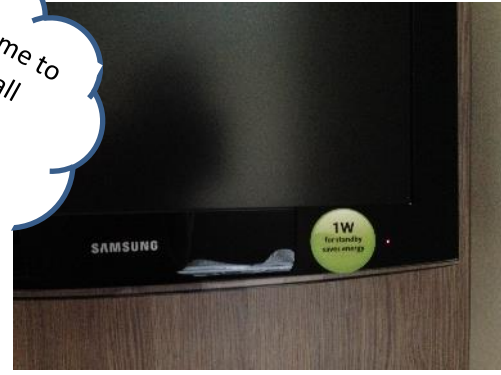
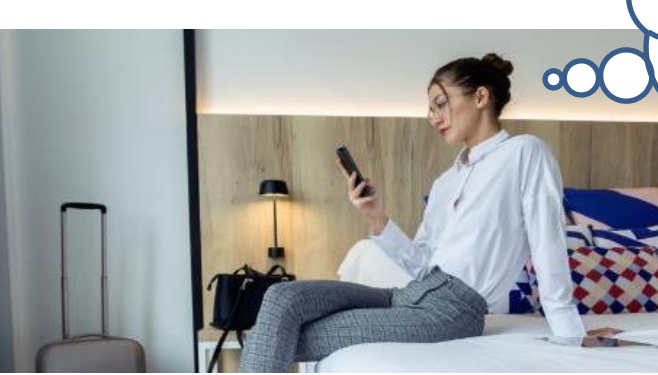
- Environmental managers/ engineers: check set up of room (e.g. windows, fridge)
- Housekeeping: How to manage room temperature
- Drivers: fuel efficient driving, vehicle maintenance (tyre pressure etc.)
- Procurement: energy efficient equipment (e.g. vehicles, appliances)
- Restaurants: minimise food waste (e.g. buffet plate sizes), compost organics
- Frontline staff: how to engage with customers, provide useful information and positive encouragement



Information for the guest

- About the local climate and other factors (e.g. drought)
- What the business itself is doing!
- Some suggestions for how to conserve
- What services are available, e.g. bikes, extra blankets
- May sign a pledge

Really! You want me to save energy when all the lights were on when I entered my room!!!



Different ways of learning

- Encourage professional development (e.g. regenerative tourism online course, technical expertise and skills in energy efficiency)
- Bring in external experts to identify carbon savings and upskill staff
- Empower staff to put forward their own ideas (e.g. competitions)
- Foster commitment and dedication to sustainability amongst staff (e.g. could be part of the job interview)
- 'Connect people' to place: culture and nature

Experience-led learning

- Outdoor learning and sensory experiences
- See and feel impacts of climate change
- Experience positive impact of (climate) action (e.g. growing trees)
- Connect climate action with other initiatives



Embed 'climate thinking' in everything we do