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ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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TURNING POLAR EXPEDITIONS INTO A LIFETIME OF ACTION

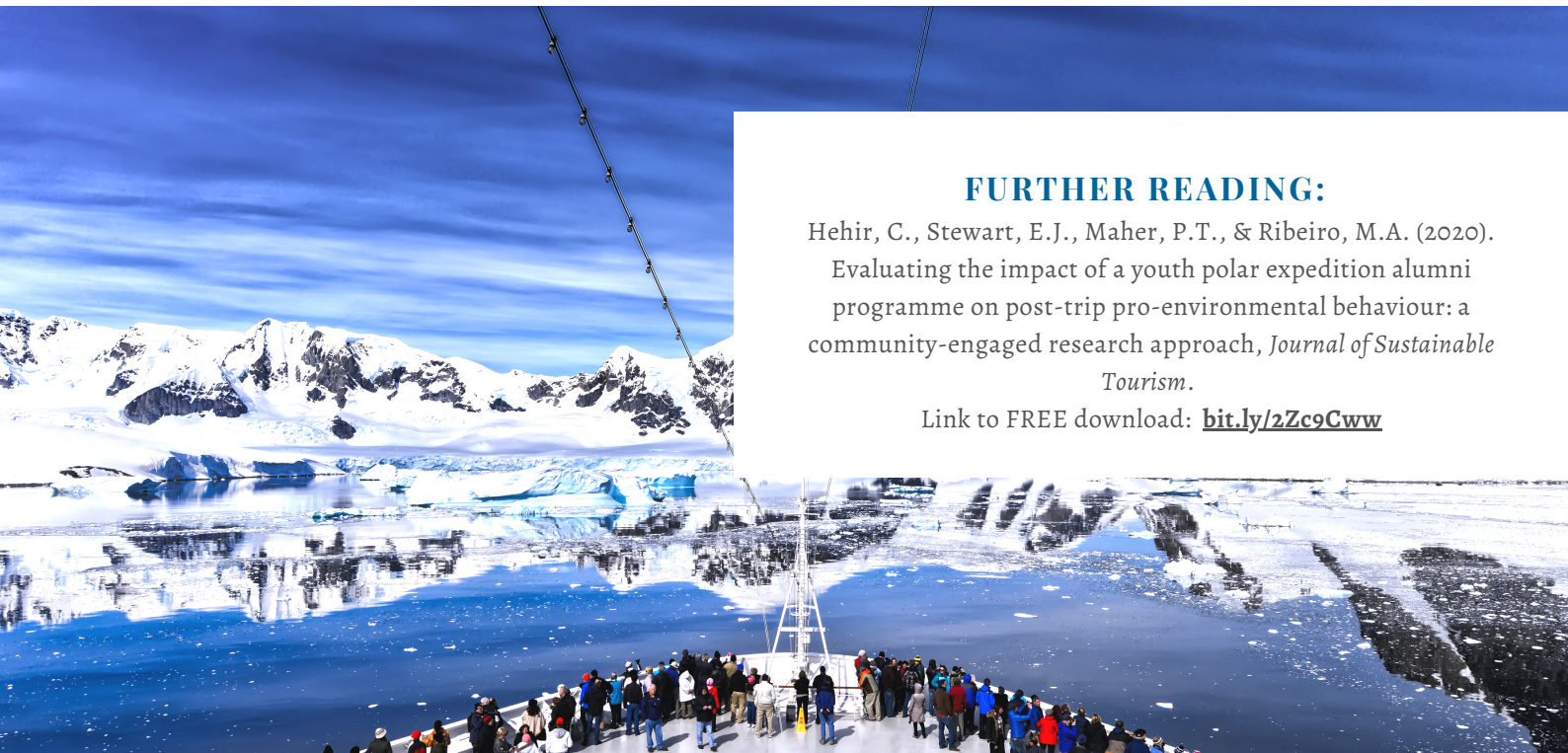
Youth programmes providing education-based expeditions to the Polar Regions have been offered for more than two decades. However, research has been inconclusive as to what impact such expeditions have had on their participants' subsequent lifestyle decisions and pro-environmental behaviours. The study by **Christy Hehir**, **Dr Alector Ribeiro**, and their colleagues in Canada and New Zealand shows the impact of youth polar expeditions on participants' pro-environmental behaviour, up to 18 years after their polar voyage.

IS SOCIAL IDENTITY THE ANSWER FOR LONG-TERM YOUTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGE?

CHRISTY HEHIR & DR ALECTOR RIBEIRO

In collaboration with **Students on Ice** (SOI), this study uses Social Identity Theory (SIT) and a Community-Engaged Research approach to identify the impact of youth polar expeditions on participants' pro-environmental behaviour. This research advances our understanding of the elusive and complex concept of polar ambassadorship. As one of the first studies to collect data up to 18 years after the experience, this work is important as it suggests that social identity with an alumni group may continue to inspire and empower young people to make

positive change in their own lives, in communities, and across the globe – not just immediately after their trip, but throughout their lifetimes. Such findings start to progress the existing literature beyond the immediate post-trip evaluations done to date. By understanding the subsequent development of participant pro-environmental values and actual behaviours in the longer-term, we generate new understanding as to what makes travelling count for conservation.



FURTHER READING:

Hehir, C., Stewart, E.J., Maher, P.T., & Ribeiro, M.A. (2020). Evaluating the impact of a youth polar expedition alumni programme on post-trip pro-environmental behaviour: a community-engaged research approach, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

Link to FREE download: bit.ly/2Zc9Cww

Furthermore, a Community-Engaged Research (CER) approach was adopted purposely within this research to evidence the maximum impact beyond the academic realm. The study's findings and subsequent implications have just been published within the '**Students on Ice Impact Report**' (page 21). Aside from Students on Ice, it is hoped other youth expedition operators will be encouraged by this research to initiate their own alumni programmes.