

**ATHE Annual Conference 2021**

***Hybrid and Virtual Experiences: Opportunity or Threat for Tourism Education and Industry?***

***- a Virtual Conference***

**9th-10th December 2021**

ABSTRACT FORM

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| **TYPE OF ABSTRACT (select ONE only)** | **Pedagogic** | **Research** | **Doctoral Colloquium** |
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| **TITLE OF ABSTRACT** | What are the digital skills gap of tourism- related businesses  |
| **CONFERENCE THEME** | Hybrid Teaching & Pedagogy |
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| **ABSTRACT** **(+150 words)** | As the technologies become more important in the everyday life, tourism and hospitality industries are increasingly adopting digital technologies to match the travellers' expectations (World Economic Forum (WEF, 2018; Mintel, 2018)*.*  By 2022 within aviation, tourism and hospitality worldwide are predicted to increase usage of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) and robotics (Mintel,2018). However, the successful adaptation of the technologies heavily relies on the people who are working within the industry and their skill set. This research forms part of a wider EU project around identifying skill gaps within the tourism sector. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to illustrate the current digital proficiencies of SME tourism-related businesses in the UK. This research aims to highlight the degree to which UK based tourism and hospitality businesses are prepared for the anticipated digital transformation. The results suggest an unbalanced representation in the UK, where a ‘digital divide’ currently exits with regards to the level of basic computer skills. This divide also appears to increase in line with the complexity of technologies.  |
| **Keywords** | Digital skills, education, technology  |

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