

Conception and Integration of Sustainability and Sustainable Tourism Development: A Comprehensive Review of Literatures

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the **conception and integration of sustainability** in sustainable tourism development, with a particular focus on its alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The review explores how sustainability principles are incorporated into tourism practices, emphasizing the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Using a systematic search of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and conference papers of the most recent decades, the study examines key themes, theoretical frameworks, case studies, and best practices in sustainable tourism. The findings highlight the role of sustainable tourism in advancing global development goals, particularly in reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, and conserving biodiversity, as outlined in the MDGs and SDGs. The review also sheds light on how sustainable tourism contributes to the achievement of SDG targets. All the 17 goals are analyzed with sustainability needs in development of tourism, such as responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), and partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17). Additionally, the paper identifies significant gaps in the literature, including the need for more localized research and stronger metrics for evaluating sustainable tourism's impact on global goals.

Keywords: Alignment, Development Goals, Global, Responsible consumption

Introduction

Sustainability refers to the practice of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Balqiah et al., 2017; Qasim et al., 2023). It encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions, ensuring that natural resources are used responsibly, communities are supported, and economic growth is achieved without depleting resources or causing environmental harm (Menegaki & Tsani, 2018). The concept of sustainability emphasizes the importance of balancing ecological preservation with human development to maintain the planet's health and resilience over time (Morris, 2012). In a broader sense, sustainability is about fostering systems and processes that support a healthier planet while also promoting social equity and economic stability (Bolis et al., 2014). This involves conserving energy, reducing waste (Qasim & Rahman, 2022), encouraging renewable resources, and ensuring fair access to opportunities for all people (Barkauskiene & Snieska, 2013). As global challenges like climate change, resource depletion, and pollution intensify, sustainability has become an essential framework for guiding decision-making in government, business, and daily life (Carroll, 2015). By embracing sustainability, one can work toward solutions that protect the environment, promote fairness, and support a thriving economy without overexploiting resources (Reisch, 2016). It's about thinking long-term, making responsible choices, and ensuring that both the natural world and future generations can thrive (Redclift, 2006).

Sustainable tourism is a concept that aligns with the broader principles of sustainability but focuses specifically on the tourism industry (Meadows et al., 2004). It aims to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, culture, and local communities while maximizing the benefits (Scheyvens, 2018). This involves practices such as reducing carbon footprints, conserving natural habitats, respecting local cultures, and supporting local economies (Yolles & Fink, 2014). Sustainable tourism

seeks to create a positive experience for both visitors and host communities by promoting responsible travel behavior and ethical tourism practices (Seager, 2008; Qasim et al., 2023). **The integration of sustainability into tourism development** involves planning and implementing strategies that prioritize long-term environmental health and social equity (Hofer, 2009). This includes adopting green technologies, such as renewable energy and waste reduction systems, as well as fostering community involvement in tourism planning (Sneddon et al., 2006).

By involving local stakeholders and addressing their needs and concerns, sustainable tourism development ensures that tourism activities contribute positively to the well-being of local populations and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage (Mascarenhas et al., 2015; Qasim et al., 2024). In line with the **principles of sustainability**, sustainable tourism seeks to balance the needs of present-day tourists with those of future generations (Lozano, 2012). This means creating tourism experiences that are not only enjoyable and economically viable but also environmentally and socially responsible (Faber et al., 2005). For instance, sustainable tourism encourages the use of renewable energy, waste reduction practices, and the protection of natural habitats, which align with sustainability's goal of reducing ecological footprints (Paehlke, 2005). Furthermore, it fosters local participation, ensuring that communities benefit directly from tourism through job creation (Qasim et al., 2022), cultural preservation, and infrastructure development (Holling, 2001).

By linking tourism to the larger framework of sustainability, sustainable tourism contributes to global efforts to achieve a more balanced and equitable world (Blewitt, 2008). It allows the tourism sector to grow without depleting natural or cultural resources, helping to ensure that destinations remain attractive and accessible for future generations while supporting local economies in a way that promotes long-term well-being (Robert et al., 2005; Hall, 2010). While there is growing awareness and interest in sustainable practices, the industry still faces obstacles such as inadequate regulation, limited resources, and resistance to change (Trupp & Dolezal, 2020). However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and collaboration (Abel et al., 2016). By leveraging new technologies, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and encouraging responsible consumer behavior, the tourism industry can enhance its sustainability efforts and pave the way for a more resilient and equitable future for global tourism.

Research Methodology

The methodology for this comprehensive review of literature on **sustainability and sustainable tourism development** follows a structured approach to ensure a thorough examination of existing research. The first step involved conducting a systematic search of relevant academic databases, to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and conference papers. Keywords such as "sustainability," "sustainable tourism," "tourism development," "ecotourism," and "environmental conservation in tourism" were used to retrieve a wide range of sources. The search also included filtering for works that directly address the theoretical frameworks and practical implementations of sustainability principles in tourism development.

After collecting the initial pool of literature, the next step involved a critical review and analysis of the selected works. Studies were chosen based on their relevance, contribution to the field, and credibility. The review focused on identifying recurring themes, theoretical perspectives, case studies, and best practices within sustainable tourism. Special attention was given to papers that highlighted the linkage between sustainability and tourism, showcasing how economic, environmental, and social aspects are integrated into sustainable tourism practices. The review process also involved identifying gaps in the literature and exploring emerging trends and challenges related to sustainable tourism development. This comprehensive methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of the current discourse and advances in sustainability and tourism.

Analyses and Discussions

Sustainability

Sustainability is a conscious and urgent guiding principle to adopt, which positively favor both the people who adopt it and the environment (Hanss & Bohm, 2012). It shifts the level of satisfaction of adopting community from unsatisfactory circumstances to satisfactory circumstances (Barkauskiene, 2013). The careful usage of available resources in such a manner that it not only facilitates the present population but also assists in consideration of others need is sustainability (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010).

Sustainability ensures the capability of suitable condition to retain the existing state or reaching a high state in socio-economic and environmental sources over space and time (Labanauskaitė et al., 2014). It is also considered as valued change that is advanced as compare to maintainability. The changes sustain, extend and benefit without any harms or difficulties to others (Paehlke, 2005).

Sustainability should be time bound because an infinite span of time can't reach at the level of sustainability. Both space and time is necessary for sustainability to sustain against disruption, discontinuities and instabilities. To live with survival while evading extinction and to resist the extermination is also sustainability (Costanza & Patten, 1995). The Spatio-temporal intricacies of interaction between carrying capacity of natural environment and complex human interventions are overcome through sustainability. Sustainability specifies the responsible human role along with systematic conservation of the environment (Lindsey, 2011; Qasim et al., 2024).

According to Holling (2009), sustainability presents solution for dearth of resources found in nature since the initiation of this concept. It guarantees the continuous and long lasting usage of the resources by consolidation with sustaining nature of human life. Ciegis et al., (2009) said that the term sustainability is innovatively a diverse consideration due to its broad domain of applicability. The definition of sustainability generally varies from domain to domain but the consensus persists in long term management in any field of life (Harlow et al., 2013).

Barbosa et al., (2014) affirmed that needs of human beings in an area and the surrounding environment are the two focal concerns of sustainability. The strategies and managements for sustainability are not applicable while ignoring one of concerns. Boluk et al., (2011) considered that the positive consequences and comprehensible signs of improvement are the necessary outcomes of sustainability. Slimane, (2014) enlightened that although the sustainability concept is globally acknowledged but few researchers consider that the gap exists worldwide interpretation of the concept due to lack of consistent and ambiguous understanding.

Stability in basic condition of human being through improvement in any approach of life and satisfaction of a social setup towards any fundamental needs of life is not possible without sustainability (Pisani, 2006; Qasim et al., 2024). The balancing of needs in progression and limits in growth is also one of the centers of attention of sustainability (Mitcham, 1995). Needs of both the present population of human being which have rights on beneficial usage of specific resources and the forthcoming population are stressed in sustainability but estimation of upcoming generation's need is not possible while the assessment of exploitation of present population is possible in sustainability (Lindsey, 2011).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development urges for development which accomplish the instant necessities without the exploitation of needs of forthcoming generation to fulfill their requirements of life (Grigoras & Albu, 2015). Sustainable development is among the rapidly maturing issues around the globe within all sectors of industries including tourism. So, it can certainly provide benefits to the concerns in many aspects (Schlor et al., 2012).

The actual conception of sustainable development varies with the nature of development because the objectives and targets of stakeholders in every developmental plan differ with each other. Therefore the

interpretation of the concept can vary management to management. The economic situation, social condition and environmental conservation are three main dimensions and pillars of sustainable development (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010).

Feil and Schrieber, (2017) stated that sustainable development urge to propose the strategies and approaches to carry the environmental system of masses to the proximity of sustainability in such a way that the complicated systems can be accorded with perpetual manners. The irresponsible paradigm of the individuals in the society is shifted towards conscientious and responsible consideration through sustainable development. The negative approaches and activities of the inhabitants are transformed into sustainable approaches (Qasim & Rahman, 2022). The progression of activities and processes with practical action for the improvement and betterment of human well being is sustainable development. The progress of well being of human through sustainable development lasts for a long term period and the development goes on (Lambin, 2005).

The frequent use and discussion regarding sustainable development around the globe started in late 20th century and globally it was acknowledged as insistent need of hour under “Brundtland Commission Report” in 1987 (Hove, 2004). In “Eco-92 or Rio-92” numbers of efforts were made for global recognition of sustainable development as new concept under UN conferences. According to Kidd (1992), the concept of sustainable development emerged in 1974 to sustain and conserve the unsustainable practices in forestry. Sustainable development cares about the future of physical environment through preservation and conservation strategies and continuance of life within that physical environment (Yasin & Qasim, 2020). The concept further discloses that natural resources facilitate in making the human life advantageous and gainful (Newton & Freyfogle, 2005). It discourages the harmful and adverse outcome of developmental approaches within any phenomenon.

According to Prugh and Assadourian (2003), conservation of nature is not indispensable through sustainable development. The term aims to initiate global level strategies and planning to overcome the economic issues by introducing new resources for global prosperity where everyone can avail the benefits. The timely action on proposed strategies is required for the development in sustainable way. Lele, (2013) considers that eradication of poverty, discouragement of inequality among individuals, wide-ranging growth and monitoring of consumption and innovative production is unavoidable for sustainable development. For sustainable outcome through innovation, the technological significance strengthens the essential arrangements. Social equity through efficient system and modernization are the leading agendas of sustainable development (Ayres, 1996).

Sustainable Development Goals SDGs (United Nations)

SDGs are a set of universal goals introduced by UN in 2015 for development of the globe in sustainable way covering communities to spheres and ecosystems of living organisms. Eradication of poverty, prosperity of living being, protection of globe and worldwide peace is the main gist of goals under SDGs (Morton et al., 2017). The goals are to be achieved by 2030 in all the 193 member countries of UN as it implemented in 2016 to 2030. Overall 17 main goals are included in SDGs but there are many associated targets with each core goal figuring 169 as whole under the vision “Transforming our world; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (UN, 2015). All the three key dimension of sustainable development including social aspects, economic advancement and environment approaches are covered under SDGs by UN (Buse & Hawkes, 2015)

 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



Figure 1 Graphical illustration of SDGs by UN, 2015

The experiences and achievements of MDGs instigated the UN for further achievable goals in development in form of SDGs (Allen et al., 2016). The MDGs were put into practice from 2015-30 for fifteen years highly supported the developments all over the globe in sustainable way and the sense of reasonable sustainable behavior arose among the people throughout the world (Scheyvens, 2018). The scope of SDGs is expansive than MDGs, as the core needs of sustainability in development is more superiorly addressed and emphasized in SDGs. In MDGs, the achievement of proposed goals was focused in developing countries of the world while the goals under SDGs are universal and the targeted countries are both the developed and developing states (Nilsson et al., 2016). The SDGs are solution for globally recognized burning issues of the era and for the mitigation of the issues a collective pace of sensible actions are needed regardless of political boundaries.

Sustainable Development Goals and Tourism

Tourism activities are rapidly contributing in strengthening the economic value of the world. So, both the developing and developed nations can't think of successful achievement of SDGs without giving special attention towards sustainable measures on tourism sector (KC et al., 2021). Tourism sector has the potential to play its role in development of societies and social approaches along with better cost effective opportunities (Hall, 2011) therefore the instigation of SDGs can be managed.

Tourism has the capability to directly influence different goals of sustainable development introduced by UN. Few of the goals are either directly related to the activities, practices and outcomes of tourism or have distinct role which can't be ignored to reach the SDGs. The key position of tourism in "economic growth, SDGs 8", "responsible consumption and production, SDGs, 12" and "Life below water, SDGs, 14" is no doubt unambiguous. Further the contributions of tourism industry in fulfilling other 17 goals of SDGs are also encouraging through poverty extermination, forwarding steps towards gender equality and conservation of environment (Hall 2019).

According to Slocum et al., (2019), the linkage of tourism industry with the goals of sustainable development regarding contribution towards achievement of goals is a difficult and ambiguous task for both the UN and the associated countries. As the “17 targets of SDGs” are not directly linked with tourism or the function of tourism is not programmed to affiliate it with the targets. The role which can be associated with the SDGs targets are the outcomes of tourism not the given task through SDGs. Scheyvens and Hughes, (2019) appended that the capability of tourism and its related activities to achieve the goals of sustainable development is definitely significant and persuasive. The stakeholders of tourism management believe that the development of tourism activities in sustainable way is inevitable for sustainable development (Qasim & Rahman, 2022) and maturity in sustainable behavior is the core idea of SDGs. The role of tourism is explicitly expressed in SDGs through ‘Goal 12’ which is responsible consumption. Under ‘Goal 12’, the eighth associated targeted “Sustainable consumption and Production”, the target 12.8 (b) states that “Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates job and promotes local culture and products” (UNDP, 2017; Boluk et al, 2019).

Goals and Targets of SDGs related to sustainable tourism

Agenda	Sustainable Development Goals	Role of Sustainable Tourism Development
01	“End poverty in all its forms everywhere”	The economical approach of STD and its impact on host communities can be associated with national poverty reduction strategies.
02	“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”	Tourism can promote agricultural production by promoting utilization and marketing of such products in tourist destinations and through surplus of value chain in tourism.
03	“Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”	The social approach of STD is to benefit the communities through tourism revenues to achieve all facilities of life including health.
04	“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”	The STD has the capability to provide the basic facilities of social institutions regardless of its beneficiaries to the communities.
05	“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”	STD can empower the females by providing job opportunities and also opportunity of different scale entrepreneurship in tourism services.
06	“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”	To protect water from wastage and excessive usage is one of the main goals of STD.
07	“Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”	Through STD, the shifting of hospitality needs on “renewable energy resources” is being ensured.
08	“Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work	The sustainable measures in tourism industry are providing job opportunities especially to the youth and also one of the significant drivers of global

	for all”	and national economy.
09	“Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”	The growth of tourism activities highly rely on availability of standard infrastructure and innovation of unique services to the tourists at the destinations.
10	“Reduce inequality within and among countries”	The STD provides equal opportunities to the rural communities to develop and also the developing countries to improve the economic status.
11	“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”	A better settlement and a better city for the residents can also be good for the tourists. The sustainable cities and settlements are helpful tools in promoting tourism activities in sustainable way.
12	“Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”	“Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products”, annexed as 12.b with SDGs targets.
13	“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”	Tourism is both the contributor and effected by climate change so to reduce emissions and adaptation of alternative sources of renewable energy is inevitable for STD.
14	“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”	The maritime tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism. So the conservation and protection of marine ecosystem is in favor of STD.
15	“Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”	Splendid landscapes, richness in biodiversity, and mountainous ecosystem attract the tourists and make such area a favorite tourist destination. The sustainable measures in tourism can conserve the diversification of species and also play its role in reduction and management of wastes.
16	“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”	Due to involvement of multi-cultural individuals and interaction of people of diverse background, tourism provide favorable environment for peaceful and inclusive societies.
17	“Strengthen the means of implementation	Tourism provide platform to private and public

	and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”	partnerships for the provision of tourism services and also engage the people of different countries to achieve the sustainable targets in tourism industry.
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Source: (UN, 2015)

Conclusion

The methodology employed in this paper has facilitated a deep understanding of the relationship between sustainability and sustainable tourism development. By systematically reviewing a wide range of peer-reviewed literature, reports, and conference papers, the study was able to identify recurring themes, theoretical frameworks, and best practices that align sustainability principles with tourism practices. The structured approach allowed for a thorough exploration of how tourism can contribute to the 17 SDGs. Through its alignment with global sustainability frameworks, such as the SDGs, sustainable tourism addresses a wide range of global challenges, including poverty alleviation, gender equality, and climate change mitigation. By focusing on responsible consumption, clean energy, and biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism offers a path toward a more balanced and equitable world. However, there remain gaps in research, particularly in the areas of localized impacts and the measurement of tourism’s contributions to sustainability targets. Sustainable tourism is a powerful vehicle for advancing all 17 SDGs by promoting environmentally responsible travel, social inclusivity, and economic viability. Sustainable tourism, when guided by these principles, serves not only as a means of economic growth but also as a catalyst for achieving broader developmental goals. This comprehensive approach ensures that tourism remains a force for good, benefiting not only the present but also future generations.

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