

Chapter 11

Sustainable Tourism Development Through Responsible and Creative Destinations

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ABSTRACT

This chapter covers an in-depth examination of sustainable tourism development by concentrating on the significance of responsible and creative destination development. Initially, emphasizing sustainable tourism's relevance in the contemporary context is provided by considering its environmental, economic significance, and socio-cultural importance. The comprehension of the concept of responsible and creative destinations is presented with emphasis on its role in accomplishing sustainable tourism objectives. In addition, sustainable tourism involves some vital principles, including economic viability, socio-cultural authenticity, and environmental conservation. These principles are discussed by highlighting their plausible influence on responsible and creative destination development.

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 changed how we work and live, and even our awareness about nature and its ecosystems and how humans contribute to damaging the environment (Ashfaq et al., 2023). The experience of this pandemic and the likelihood of having other similar events in the future have led us to change our behavior to preserve the environment and actively contribute to alleviating the damage we have already caused. As the pandemic crisis has been overcome, tourism is experiencing a significant boost after a hard time for the industry due to mandatory isolation and lockdown measures worldwide. The tourism industry has already undergone radical transformations following principles of equity and inclusion (Cheung & Li, 2019; Milano et al., 2019) and a greater awareness of its potential to contribute to sustainable development, satisfying the needs of tourists while enhancing the economic, social, and environmental conditions of communities (Dinh et al., 2023). Traditional tourism negatively impacts the ecosystem through environmental degradation, pollution, and overcrowding (e.g., overuse of natural resources, disrupts local life, water shortage, more traffic congestion, and high noise and air pollution). Although the rise of sustainable tourism began in the 1980s, tourism businesses are currently forced to be environmentally responsible to remain competitive (Sharma & Bhat, 2023).

Tourism is one of the key industries that could contribute significantly to achieving a sustainable planet (Hall, 2019) and is considered one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing industries around the world (Bhat & Sharma, 2021; Sharma & Bhat, 2022), providing numerous benefits to regions, including economic welfare, increased employment opportunities, and fostering cultural exchanges between people from different locations, regions, and countries (Sadykov et al., 2023). Sustainable tourism positively impacts society, culture, the economy, and the environment (Mercado et al., 2023), and it plays a vital role in rural development (Nooripoor et al., 2021). However, sustainable tourism requires support from residents. When they understand the impact of tourism on their quality of life and recognize the long-term benefits, they are more likely to support tourism development initiatives in their community (Han et al., 2023). Thus, the development trends of the tourism industry are supported by the notion of regenerative tourism, which aims to transform the social-ecological systems in tourism destinations to promote human/non-human well-being through meaningful tourism experiences (Cave et al., 2022). This approach benefits communities and establishes a restorative relationship with nature (Hussain & Haley, 2022). In contrast to traditional “over-tourism,” defined by Peeters et al. (2018) as “a situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological and political capacity thresholds” (p.15), sustainable and responsible tourism positively

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