



## **SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT: ECOTOURISM- PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS FOR "CULTURAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM" (CST)**

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**Abstract:** Resilience and sustainable development are concepts that have emerged prominently in post-Covid-19 recovery thinking, whether on an international, national, regional, or local level – the ability to recover from crisis and the sustainable use of resources is at the heart of the current discourse. Eco and cultural tourism, a subset of the tourism industry, is no exception and entails responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the well-being of the local people facilitating learning of cultures. More than that, such tourism places a strong emphasis on local participation in the creation of travel experiences. Ecotourism should "sustain the well-being of local people, as well as create local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people," according to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Furthermore, local involvement is joint in rural tourism, allowing tourists to learn about local culture and lifestyles. These local characteristics are summed up by the broad term & "community-based ecotourism." In other words, the ideal is environmentally conscious travel that increases a traveler's appreciation of nature's beauty, biodiversity, and culture while lowering carbon footprint.

Historic towns and heritage cities are crucial in ensuring more sustainable cultural tourism. Tourists also contribute to preserving natural and cultural environments by following specific guidelines issued by local authorities. These guidelines demonstrate how decision-makers can evaluate their current approach and begin to develop a clear plan of action for a better, more sustainable, and resilient future. The present paper dilates on aspects of eco and cultural tourism and the overall action plans and guidelines laid down by local governments in select countries.

**Keywords:** Culture, Ecotourism, Environment, Sustainability.

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### **Introduction:**

The concept of sustainable development holds that human civilizations must exist and satisfy their wants without endangering the capacity of future generations to do the same. The Brundtland Report from 1987 introduced the first "official" concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a strategy for structuring society to ensure its long-term viability that entails considering immediate and long-term implications, including social and economic equality or preserving the environmental assets and natural resources. The main components of environmental sustainability are social development and progress, environmental protection and regulations, and economic growth. "Socio-cultural development" has recently replaced the phrase "social development." This idea entails a

properly and purposely designed relationship between the pillars to ensure intra- and multigenerational economic, ecological, and social balance (Liu, Z., 2003).

The relationships between the three foundational tenets of environmental sustainability are generally considered mutually advantageous and agreeable. However, among the three components of sustainable development, social sustainability is the least well-established, even though it has become regular in addition to environmental or economic sustainability. Therefore, there was an attempt to improve and integrate the social aspect of sustainable development into standard-setting bodies, planners, and professionals in many different fields, including fair-trade certified, sustainable farming, conventional agricultural production, urban and regional planning, corporate environmental and social managerial staff, reporting, and obligation (McKinnon, A., 2010).

Sustainable tourism includes all forms of tourism-related activities, administration, and development that protect the environment, the economy, and society while simultaneously preserving natural and cultural resources. Sustainable ecotourism development ideas and business practices may benefit all types of tourism, including mass tourism and specialized tourist segments (Weaver, D.B., 2001). Sustainable Tourism tends to refer to sustainable practices solutions in and by the tourism market that is an aspiration for the impacts of all types of tourism that should be sustainable. According to Wikipedia, sustainable tourism "addresses the demands of travelers, the industry, the environment, and host communities while fully accounting for its present and future financial, social, and environmental implications." A balance between these three components must be maintained to ensure long-term sustainability. Sustainability principles pertain to tourist development's ecological, economic, and socio-cultural components (Moscardo, G., 2008).

It is unusual for tourism businesses to implement sustainable development principles. It is because tourist businesses only consider a small portion of social and environmental costs in their economic calculations. In reality, the most popular solutions are those that are inexpensive (printing pamphlets, marking the location), contribute to cost savings (energy conservation in hotels, recycling), enable better position placement of brand companies to set themselves apart from the contest and elicit a favorable reaction from customers (Sharpley, R., 2006).

### **Ecotourism:**

The category of sustainable tourism development includes ecotourism. Emerging nations are increasingly embracing ecotourism and incorporating it into their economic development and conservation policies because of its recognized promise as a viable instrument for sustainable development. Visits to natural places or wild habitats became part of ecotourism, an alternate solution to travel, learn from, study, or engage in environmentally friendly practices (Cater, E., 1993). This form of travel is centered on nature and supports the economic growth and social of the societies where it takes place. It strongly emphasizes getting to know nature, including its environment, plants, wildlife, and ecosystems, as well as local cultural items. When this theory can become applicable to legislation, careful planning, and delicate application, a dynamic and complicated interaction between the ecosystem and tourism activities is conceivable. Carefully crafted ecotourism destinations can offer immediate advantages that may lessen the impact of other less sustainable uses of natural and cultural resources, which is especially true if they are village-based and involve participation in local. Natural resources, traditional and cultural heritage, a rural way of life, and ecotourism are examples of local economic activity (Weaver, D.B., 2001).

As a result, tourism in natural and cultural places involves several features in its natural ecosystem and cultural landscape (water, view, elevation, greenery, fresh air), as well as a variety of leisure activities appropriate for all types of surroundings. Therefore, ecotourism is a powerful force that draws people in with its natural resources and raw ingredients for creation. Moreover, by giving the local community a much more sustainable alternative source of income, ecotourism aids in the development of local communities (Farrell, B.H. & Runyan, D., 1991). Its goal is to preserve resources, particularly biological variety, and ensure sustainable use of natural resources so that tourists may have an ecological experience, protect the environment, and profit economically.

However, the success of ecotourism relies on whether its goals are both economically viable and environmentally and ecologically sound. Ecotourism aids the local population in preserving the region's ecosystem and biodiversity, offering the community financial benefits. Ecotourism emphasizes participation in local communities, ownership, and new businesses, especially for rural residents, and supports the local economy while also preserving biodiversity, promoting small and medium-sized tourism businesses, requiring the least amount of natural resource usage, and, above all, providing opportunities for education for visitors and the tourism sector (Blamey, R.K., 2001).

Ecotourism must be thorough and consider the complexity of the concerns addressed in this article to promote sustainable behavior that can help local people, protect the environment, and be commercially successful. Ecotourism is the foundation of eco-cultural tourism, which even the United Nations has backed since 2012 to fight poverty, save the environment, and promote sustainable development. It acknowledges the significance of biodiversity preservation, the protection of natural regions, and the sustainable use of such resources. It promotes local businesses to grow and prosper and encourages visitors to appreciate and conserve the region's natural and cultural history (Buchsbaum, B.D., 2004).

Following various suggestions from the World Travel and tourism council, this development is now viable (UNWTO). Member States were encouraged to implement ecotourism incentive schemes, highlighting the benefits of economic growth, job creation, and educational advancement. Ecotourism has become a topic of discussion in national and international summits since the early 1990s, and 2002 was designated the International Year after Ecotourism. Tourist is a brand-new type of travel where the primary goal is not to make money, seize property, or use the resources of locals and nations to the advantage of large corporations. It has become a name for itself within a new idea of tourism, both socioeconomically and as a helpful activity that incorporates the preservation of cultural and natural sites with financial and recreation activities benefits thru sustainable development and enhances the circumstances of the person receiving communities. The primary drivers are experiences of observing, enjoyment, and reflection in the context of the cultural and natural surroundings (Uzama, A., 2009).

It is a variation on the idea of sustainable development, which aims to have little adverse influence on the environment and local culture while fostering economic growth, job creation, and ecosystem preservation. It is attentive to cultural and ecological issues. The idea of sustainable development moves around the initiatives on ecotourism development. It frequently sees sustainable tourism development as requiring striking a balance between social, economic, and environmental objectives. Its goal is to mitigate the dangers brought on by unrestricted tourism. Sustainable tourism views the link between tourists, the tourism

sector, and host regions and their environments and populations as a triangle (Bhuiyan et al., 2011)

The tourist sector controlled the triangle, and in this setting, sustainable tourism strives to resolve conflicts between the triangle's three stakeholders and maintain balance over time. Additionally, it seeks to reduce societal and environmental harm, enhance tourist happiness, and promote long-term regional economic prosperity. It is a means of finding a balance between the necessity for environmental protection and the growing potential of tourism. Tourism is a tool for revitalizing the rural economy and a method to value conservation (Briedenhann, J. and Wickens, E., 2004). However, the rural ecosystem is highly delicate since it is susceptible to damage from quick changes of any kind. Tourism is a strong force for change which is a significant problem since rural regions serve as vital economic centers and custodians of cultural and natural heritage in many nations. As a result, "rurality" serves as a distinctive marketing factor for vacations in the countryside. Tourists seek out beautiful, untouched landscapes and calm and quiet isolation. However, tourism growth will eventually erode reality and cause adverse effects on the environment, cultures, and economy (Pitkanen, K., 2008).

However, if implemented, the idea of sustainable tourism could operate as a potent tool to mitigate any unfavorable effects that travel could have. Sustainable aspects of rural tourism include the culture and character of the host communities, the terrain and ecosystems, the rural economy, and the tourist sector. In collaboration with the World Wildlife Fundraising for Nature, Tourism Concern (1991) created ten communities based on ecotourism principles: Utilizing resources wisely, reducing the amount of waste and high consumption, preserving biodiversity species Considering tourism while planning to promote regional economies, involving neighborhood communities Having the community and industry consult, personnel development, responsible tourist marketing, and doing research (Ursache, M., 2015).

These guidelines include taking good care of, organizing, and monitoring ecotourism locations and preventing harm to natural resources, acting as just power for conservation, and developing and implementing environmentally sound initiatives in all aspects of tourism. Also, installing suitable systems to reduce harmful emissions from tourism activities, developing and implementing viable transportation policies, adhering to the protection of the environment, conducting research, establishing and adhering to a location's available capacity, and honoring cultural and linguistic diversity are few examples of such measures (Probstl et al., 2014).

Different strategies support both conservation and the local economy. Foreign exchange gains, employment opportunities, infrastructural development expansion, lengthy economic stability, and economic transformation are all potential economic advantages. On the other hand, if an area's resilience and community's capacity to withstand influence exceeds, or if its diversity and unique features are dramatically changed, ecotourism potential will be lost. To prevent the captivity of incremental change, both of these approaches to sustainable tourist development promote a comprehensive strategy for environmental management.

Sustainable tourist development utilizes resources to minimize waste, and excessive consumption preserves cultural, social, and ecological variety and incorporates tourism development into national development strategies. Therefore, sustainability is the major innovation that does not harm the ecological, social, economic, or cultural variety.

Ecotourism effectively incorporates sustainable tourism to preserve the area's social, cultural, and natural surroundings. Furthermore, through the involvement of locals, ecotourism sustainability also seeks to raise awareness of current regional cultures and landscapes (Nilsson et al., 2011).

On the other side, as the population ages in Europe, more visitors in their third decade are drawn to agri-tourism, rural tourism, and other types of tourism that address their issues (religious, gastronomic, ecotourism, spa). Additionally, there is a growing interest in environmental and health problems. Urban residents also take increasingly frequent and brief holidays, and they want locations that are accessible and affordable. Therefore, a calm vacation destination in a clean atmosphere is becoming more and more popular, especially in light of the present pandemic crisis. Under these circumstances, WOT predicts that Eastern Europe will overtake Western Europe as the primary sub-regional destination, providing a favorable chance for the growth of this market in our nation (Stankov et al., 2019).

The technological innovations, social harmony (community interplay between both the locals as well as the visitors, connection to tourism for disadvantaged groups), competitive financial nature at all levels (national, regional, local), and sustainability (climate change, resource preservation) are just a few of the significant regional development priorities that tourist industry is directly related. Additionally, tourism significantly improves territorial cohesion, the economic growth of regions experiencing an economic loss (peripheral areas, mountainous areas, underprivileged areas), and the gaps between urban and rural areas. Given its uniqueness and significance, tourism must be a significant part of Dubai's future economic structure (Trang, Vukorep, & Stopp., 2019).

The environment is a crucial resource for the tourist sector and a town's general quality of life. The tourism sector's viability and the future of the world as a whole depend on protection and sustainability (Green and Hunter, 1992). Lessons from prior tourism development experiences indicate that how effectively a development is designed and managed will significantly impact its ability to be sustainable. Another well-acknowledged fact is that there is a significant gap between the strategy for sustainable tourism development and its practical application. Due to, among other things, a lack of knowledge to assist in planning and efficient tools to facilitate execution, many tourism developments plans never come to fruition (Briassoulis, 2002; Michelle, 2006).

There are frequently a variety of businesses inside a tourist destination engaged in offering tourist services and goods; in most nations, a sizable portion of them are locally owned small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (Huybers and Bennett, 2002). However, since these SMEs may not react coherently to international environmental efforts and sustainable development regulations, the application of sustainable tourism projects has frequently proven fruitless (Vernon et al., 2003). Consequently, numerous scholars (McCool & Moisey, 2001; Fredirico, 2002) have concentrated on describing the characteristics of tourism and its effects on socio-economic and cultural development and the environment to create better sustainable tourist development. In addition, several researchers highlighted the significance of developing the guiding principles of sustainable tourism development. (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Sharpley, 2000).

Researchers frequently examine tourism developmental problems from a limited rather than a comprehensive perspective. For example, environmental activists have frequently examined the detrimental effects of tourism development on environmental assets and have focused

mainly on conservation issues, while economists have focused on tourism economic effect assessment and model of tourism development design processes. Understanding how tourism businesses adopt and respond to sustainable tourism and environmental protection policies and initiatives has received relatively little attention, particularly in developing countries where the extraction of environmental resources frequently serves as the primary driver of economic development (Song, Dwyer, & Cao, 2012).

Unsurprisingly, sustainable tourism has become a guiding principle in tourism research since it aims to resolve conflicts between the objectives of economic gain, environmental preservation, and social justice equity. There have been several scholarly contributions to sustainable tourism research, especially in the last five years (Howie, 2003; McKercher, 2003). These investigations have given us much vital information on sustainable tourism, but there is still a large gap between theoretical constructs and their practical application in the growth of the tourism industry. Ironically, the success of modern tourism growth has contributed to the deterioration of tourist resources in popular travel locations and the environment (natural and social).

### **The subsequent paragraphs present an overview of the sustainable tourism aspects in Dubai**

#### **Sustainable Tourism in Dubai:**

The best destination in the world is Dubai. Intending to attract 20 million tourists, Dubai has established a high standard for sustainable development, and HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum was the one to start using sustainable development strategies. For sustainable development, the UAE will transition to a green economy. Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) is a public-private partnership that includes the participation of the administration, hotel owners, travel agencies, and residents. In addition, Dubai is integrating sustainability ideas into all facets of the travel industry and applying environmental requirements throughout its many infrastructure projects (Sahib, U., 2020).

Al Ain is the most well-known green location in the United Arab Emirates. Visit the 4,000-year-old graves at Hili Fort, the Al Ain National Museum, and Al Ain Fort to learn more about this desert oasis' rich history. In addition, Fujairah is home to some of the nation's most well-liked scuba diving sites. Divers will adore the marine life and magnificent underwater seascapes in the United Arab Emirates.

At the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, tourists can visit and take in the 6,000 native trees, grasses, and plants, as well as herds of oryx and other desert animals. The opulent Al Maha Resorts and Spa, inspired by an old Bedouin encampment, attracts visitors to the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve. Al Batinah Island, one of the United Arab Emirates' well-known protected areas, symbolizes the nation's commitment to environmental preservation and biodiversity. The island is home to dolphins, ospreys, Socotra cormorants, natural mangroves, sea cows, and coral reefs (Sutcliffe, M. and Bannister, S., 2020).

Well-conserved areas, such as Bastakiya, Al Maktoum House, and Al Seef, are examples of Dubai's ongoing efforts to preserve the city's legacy, and the Dubai Museum is doing a fantastic job in this respect.

Dubai's tourism companies have a significant part to play in sustainability. We are responsible for operating our daily operations in a way that respects the environment, culture, residents, and tourists. In order to provide our visitors with a memorable experience of the Middle East, we are collaborating with local and international organizations to integrate sustainable tourism measures into our programs and tours (Alraouf, A.A., 2008).

### **Rules and Policies towards Sustainable and Responsible Tourism:**

Dubai has designated, and reserved areas for tours and informs all visitors about the natural and cultural aspects of the places they have seen and how they contribute to the preservation of regional ecosystems. As an illustration, look at our Heritage Desert Safari inside the Dubai Desert Preservation Reserve and our City tour, which includes stops at Bastakiya, Al Maktoum House, and the Dubai Opera House. In Dubai, they train their drivers and tour guides to prevent causing damage to the places we visit, mainly if the schedule contains historic sites and historical buildings. We also teach tourists to leave the places clean and undamaged (Wood, M.E., 2017).

To avoid overrunning people at destinations, they constantly advertise small group tours and plan them accordingly. In addition, guides are picked based on their level of familiarity with the culture and history of the destination since we want to support locally owned hotels, restaurants, and other vendors.

They give our visitors and guides instructions on exploring sensitive areas without causing harm, such as keeping a decent distance from wildlife, remaining on pathways to prevent trampling plants or creating erosion, and minimizing water and energy use. In addition, businesses adhere to the country's labor laws and give all employees equal chances, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, or creed (Tladi, D., 2004).

By planning our routes to include renowned ecotourism destinations in Dubai, including Al Ain, Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve, and Al Yasat Protected Marine Area in the emirate of Dubai, promote and support ecotourism in Dubai. In the emirate of Dubai, there are the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary and the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, Emirate of Sharjah's Wadi Al Helou, Meliha, and Wasit environmental reserves (Rghei, A. and Nelson, G., 2008).

### **Socio-Economic Responsibility Policies:**

The tourism industry is central to all of it. Dubai constantly prioritizes marketing and selling tours and activities in the Middle East that support the culture and legacy of the region and equitably distribute revenue among residents (Al-Oun, S. and Al-Homoud, M., 2008). Investors in Dubai follow local dress codes and cultural stipulations of each place and advertise while educating visitors about the customs and cultural traditions of the area. In the country, small-group trips are planned so that participants may enjoy authentic local food. Dubai city excursions come with qualified local guides and many languages to lower language discrimination and make locations more internationally accessible. Due to the universality of the human urge to travel and discover, the World Tourism Organization (WOT) has sponsored this year's World Tourism Day on the theme "Tourism for inclusive growth." For the economic and social benefits it offers, travel must be "open" to everyone. One of the most significant developing businesses during the past three decades has been tourism. While tourism is a large business and a significant source of foreign exchange, it makes up a sizeable portion of many people's annual discretionary income in the so-called developed countries (Harding, 2014).

High investments in places that benefit the local community by demonstrating solid sustainable tourism can promote sustainable tourism. Therefore, Dubai has ensured to follow Sustainable Tourism Economics for regional and corporate feasibility with competitiveness to create long-term viability. It also enhances the economic benefits of the local city from tourism. Furthermore, sustainable ecotourism also includes increasing the number and caliber of jobs associated with tourism in the neighborhood, including pay, working conditions, and equal employment opportunities, which ensures the fair and equal distribution of social and economic advantages of tourism.

### **Sustainable Tourism's Environmental Aspects:**

Dubai has been able to conserve and improve the landscape value while reducing the environmental and aesthetic blight, maintaining and improving the environmental quality in both urban and rural areas, and minimizing environmental and aesthetic pollution. Unfortunately, there is very little to talk about diversity in biology, but still, the government has been maintaining the ecosystem, natural habitats, and wildlife, as well as minimizing the adverse effects of tourism on the environment. Limiting the use of scarce and non-renewable elements in the growth of tourism has been one aspect, while there are several initiatives to cut back on garbage production and the contamination of water, air, and soil which can degrade the landscape and reduce biodiversity.

### **Conclusion:**

The combination of tourism with heritage can create a particular interest in tourism. Despite its promise, it also results in arguments that have negative societal repercussions. As a consequence, environmental factors must be taken into account while promoting historical tourism. Sustainable tourism development considers the economic, social, and environmental aspects. The three qualities of environmental sustainability become part of sustainable tourism, notably in tourism destinations, since sustainable tourism comes from sustainable development. In most instances, the three facets of sustainable development mostly work together and complement one another. Although it is the best combination with ecological or economic sustainability, social sustainability is the least well-established of the three components of sustainable development. There have been attempts to consider and integrate the social aspect of sustainable development into standard-setting bodies, planners, and practitioners in a variety of fields, including forest credential, sustainable farming, traditional agriculture, urban and regional planning, corporate environmental and social management, reporting, and obligation, and fair-trade certification. However, the social aspect of tourist development has not been the subject of much research. In order to achieve sustainable tourism growth, we must concentrate on the economic and environmental aspects.

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