



## ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM

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### Abstract

The tourism sector has been on rapid growth in recent years. Various activities requiring the use of man's ecological resources have been on the rise as well, leading to increased global concerns. Although tourism creates jobs, generates revenue and promotes the protection, integration and empowerment of the more vulnerable members of our communities, it is however important to make future projections of the future we want for the coming generations, hence the need for sustainable development. This paper examines the various means of achieving sustainable development with tourism as the driver. It used the review of literature to establish the various scholarly views on the subject, thereby presenting a comprehensive tool for enlightenment. It recommended the implementation of the various targets of the sustainable development goals relating to tourism and co-operation by national and international agencies in the strive for achieving a healthy, productive and sustainable environment.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, Tourism, Economic growth, International agencies

### Introduction

Since the setting out of the sustainable development goals (a set of 17 goals with 169 targets) in 2015 by the United Nations assembly, the UN member nations have relentlessly worked towards actualising these goals through the different sectors of the economy. Despite the fluctuations in the economy of many countries of the world, international tourist arrivals have experienced an annual increase of around 4% since 2009. Also, *Tourism represents nearly 10% of the world's GDP and 30% of global services exports and ranks third after fuels and chemicals, and is ahead of food and automotive products in international trade* (World Tourism Organization, International Trade Centre and Enhanced Integrated Framework, 2017). These interesting facts suggests that the tourism industry has a great role to play in the achievement of sustainable development.

Scholars who have attempted to define what constitute sustainable development hold similar views on the subject. According to Vukonić and Keča(2001) sustainable development is defined as changes in the structure of global production and expenditure which do not disturb the ecosystems. Authors Kordej de Villa, Stubbs and Sumpor(2009) noted the definition of sustainable development as a concept that encompasses economic, social and environmental dimensions. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED,1987), defines sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” . From these, we could conclude that sustainable development is a solution to man's needs whose influence extends to the economic, social, and environmental spheres of the society and as well reserves potentials for the coming generations to meet their own needs.

## A Review On The Concept Of Sustainable Tourism

It is noteworthy that tourism on its own must be sustainable as to have the capacity to catalyse sustainable development. Sustainable tourism has a diversified meaning, principles, charter and codes to different regions of the world, depending on the natural resources that tourism in such area affects. Nistoreanu et al. (2003) are of the view that sustainable development is “a development of all kinds of tourism, tourism management and marketing that respects the natural, social and economic environmental integrity, while ensuring the exploitation of natural and cultural resources for future generations”.

In the same vein, Agnati (1999, p.79) lays emphasis on the fact that sustainable tourism embodies “all forms of development that allow the meeting of its own needs and the achievement of its own objectives without compromising the possibility of future generations to meet their own needs and achieve their own objectives”. UNESCO opines that “*The challenge of sustainable tourism development is to make use of tourism's positive impacts, enhancing and channelling the benefits into the right directions, and to avoid or mitigate the negative impacts as far as possible*” this points to the fact that the influence of tourism as a whole on an environment comprises of both a positive and a negative side, thus the need to meticulously harness the impacts that are sustainable while putting aside it's components that could harm the environment in the future. Trumbic (1999, p.53) pointed out a series of ideas on sustainable tourism with an impact on the specialty literature as follows; “Blangy, 1997: sustainable tourism applied in a particular area is any form of development, supply of facilities or tourist activities that takes into consideration the respect for communities and long-term conservation of natural, cultural and social resources, and positively and equitably contributes to the economic development and well-being of the human communities that dwell, work and live in such areas;

- Thibal, 1997: sustainable tourism is based on the development of natural, cultural and social resources with the aim to improve the life standard and quality of local residents, while visitors' expectations and needs are met and natural habitats and cultural identity are preserved for future generations;
- Ashiotis, 1995: sustainable tourism guarantee the integrity of all non-renewable resources while maintaining its economic viability in a highly competitive international market;
- Travis, 1994: sustainable tourism is represented by all forms of tourism development, tourism management and tourism activity that allow a long-term operation of the cultural activity which is called tourism, implying a series of tourism products that are compatible with the preservation of protected heritage resources of a natural, cultural or anthropogenic nature, all of which make possible the tourism activity;
- Middleton, 1998: sustainable tourism calls for a certain combination of numbers and types of visitors that show a cumulative effect for a given destination; such cumulative effect added by active businesses in the services sector may carry on during the foreseeable future without impairing the quality of the environment where the activities are carried out.”

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) made a popular definition of sustainable tourism as such; “*Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system.*” [WTO 1998: 19].

In general, sustainable development must therefore, be able to meet a wide range of needs of the people and their future generation, while preserving the quality of resources used in satisfying these needs.

## Instruments of Tourism for Sustainable Development

Tourism is a powerful tool for achieving the sustainable development goals. As part of the key sectors of international trade and a notable wealth and job creator for many countries, tourism possesses great potential in serving as a vehicle for reaching the ambitious milestones of the sustainable development goals agenda. In a co-operate work of the World Tourism Organization, International Trade Centre and Enhanced Integrated Framework (2017), tourism was observed to have the capacity to contribute directly or indirectly to all 17 SDGs. However, tourism futures as a key target in three of these goals;

on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources. These will form the areas of concentration in this section;

### ***Inclusive and sustainable economic growth through tourism***

It has been mentioned previously that tourism contributes immensely in the world's GDP, international trade and global service export. The UNWTO observes that *"By giving access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society-particularly youth and women- can benefit from enhanced skills and professional development."* Target 8.9 of the SDGs explicitly recognises the sectors contribution to job creation as follows ***"By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products"***. In the area of job creation, the UNWTO analysis found out that tourism accounts for 1 out of every 11 jobs worldwide.

Tourism is labour intensive and thus provides a wide range of different employment opportunities, ranging from highly skilled to the unskilled (UNWTO, 2004 ). There is a general belief that the rate of youth employment in the tourism industry is higher than in any other sector. This is reasonably true as there is high need for both unskilled and averagely skilled workers in Tourism establishments. The issue of workforce diversification in terms of gender is evident in the tourism sector, there is high presence of women in this field, and this may be basically related to cultural issues. For instance, it is believed in many culture of the world that women are better housekeepers, and are better than their male counterparts in food preparation and attending to guest. While this may not apply generally, the major roles played by most women in the sector seems to lend credence to this belief. The world travel and tourism council (2016) projects that *by 2026, Travel & Tourism will account for 135,884,000 jobs directly, an increase of 2.1% pa over the next ten years*. From the ongoing, it can be observed that the growth potential of tourism and its integration of different ages and gender in the work force promises inclusion and sustainability in the world economic growth.

### ***Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) through tourism***

A major characteristic of tourism is the exchange of goods and services for financial benefits. The United Nations Environmental program defines sustainable consumption and production (UNEP) as *"the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations"*. SCP relates to tourism as stated in the ninth target of the twelfth sustainable development goal – *"Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products"*.

To ensure that this is achieved, the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (10YFP); a global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in both developed and developing countries was established with the following objectives, according to UNEP;

- ✓ Accelerate the shift towards SCP, supporting regional and national policies and initiatives.
- ✓ Contributing to resource efficiency and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and resource use, while creating decent jobs and economic opportunities and contributing to poverty eradication and shared prosperity.
- ✓ Mainstream SCP into sustainable development policies, programmes and strategies, as appropriate, including into poverty reduction strategies.
- ✓ Support capacity building and facilitate access to financial and technical assistance for developing countries, supporting the implementation of SCP activities at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.
- ✓ Enable all stakeholders to share information and knowledge on SCP tools, initiatives and best practices, raising awareness and enhancing cooperation and development of new partnerships – including public-private partnerships.

These objectives shades more light on what the "services and related products " needed to actualize SCP to include policy making process; this requires the need to "think SCP" while the establishment of a tourist destination is on the planning table. As the policies have to be endorsed by the government of any geographical location in which tourism takes

place, making viable policies therefore is a co-operate responsibility of both the shareholders of such tourism venture and the government. the need for resource efficiency and avoidance of environmental degradation points to the fact that uttermost care must be taking will chooses between various energy supply alternatives for the tourist destination to ensure that greener means of power generation is used. Furthermore, the engagement of employable members of the host community in any tourist destination is pertinent if poverty alleviation would be achieved. This places limitation to the excessive use of foreign expertise and intelligent machines that could drastically cut down employment.

#### *Sustainable use of ocean and marine resources in tourism*

The seventh target of the fourteenth sustainable development goal – “By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism” portrays tourism as a key influence to the sustainable use of marine resources. Tourism contributes significantly to the revenue generated in the coastal regions of the world. A greater part of this tourism derives from coastal resources, which require healthy marine ecosystem such as fishing, swimming, boating etc. because of the high demand on these marine resources, certain negative impacts such as overfishing, discharge of untreated wastes into the ocean, biodiversity interference and depletion of natural marine reserves leads to unsustainable tourism practices. To curb this, the concept of ecotourism was introduced. This implies the “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism strikes a balance between the economic benefits of tourism and environmental conservation to ensure sustainability of tourist activities with the least adverse effect on the environment.

Lawal Mohammed Marafa (2008) suggested the modification of the concept of the 4C’s first postulated by Owen *et al.*, (1993) to serve as the framework for sustainable coastal tourism development. These include; “**compromise** (by striking a balance between tourism development and environmental conservation); **commitment** (by recognizing that sustainable development and indeed sustainable tourism development requires action and less rhetoric); **control** (by establishing a framework or plan for effective regulation of the scale and pattern of development), and **cooperation** (by recognizing the need for partnership with both local and international dimension)”. Further steps for repositioning costal tourism to contribute maximally to the conservation of marine and ocean resources where suggested by Frans de Man (2016) as follows;

- When developing tourism, marine and coastal areas should be protected, left intact and managed as ecosystems. Construction close to the shore should be prohibited and no construction should happen without proper management of water, sewage and waste. Educating tourists and especially people doing water sports may contribute to reducing impacts on ecosystems.
- Safeguarding the livelihood of coastal communities needs to be given priority over the interests of tourists and tourism businesses, with strategies for the sustainable use of marine resources, including for small-scale artisanal fisheries. Tourism should support food security and social equity. Meaningful linkages with coastal economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and services can significantly increase local value added.
- Any tourism development must start with codetermination and the participation of local communities. Research and capacity building help to build on local knowledge and develop innovative solutions.
- Subsidies for bunker fuels and the most damaging modes of transport and sources of energy must be abolished. Prices must reflect the real costs, including social and ecological costs.
- Appropriate coordinating mechanisms for integrated policies and international cooperation and coordination need to be established or strengthened. Effective governance structures need to set goals with realistic and applicable criteria and monitoring. International cooperation can help guarantee sustainable development of the areas beyond national jurisdiction, including international waters, and needs to be enhanced.
- Human resources is the greatest asset on which tourism thrives. Proper enlightenment of tourists with regard to safe environmental practices and other regulations guiding tourism in a given region could also help in achieving co-operation with regulatory bodies.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper highlighted the importance of tourism in achieving sustainable development. It portrayed the need of ensuring that tourism is sustainable if it will ever contribute to the sustainable development of other sectors of the economy. The SDGs were examined and the goals relating to tourism were extracted and discussed. The contributions of various components of tourism to sustainable development hinged on the fact that enforceable policies and regulations must be in place, coupled with public enlightenment. The benefits of achieving sustainable development through tourism has been exposed as, having a greener, safer environment that would allow the coming generations enjoy healthy lives. Also, it is obvious that constructively modifying tourist activities will not diminish the revenue generated in this sector, but would rather position it for increased long term earnings. The responsibility of achieving sustainable development belongs to both the government and non-governmental agencies as well as individuals for better results.

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