Editorial

Reflections on Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality Advancements

Considering the numerous environmental concerns, such as the greenhouse effect, pollution, species extinction, and resource depletion, sustainability in the tourist and hospitality business has emerged as a significant concern (Han, 2021). Scholars underline that these difficulties are primarily the result of ecologically irresponsible human conduct (Malheiro et al., 2020). Addressing these difficulties requires a change toward more ecologically friendly activities, notably in individual consumption habits. The notion of ecologically sustainable consumer behavior has gained popularity, reflecting acts that save natural resources, reduce environmental damage, and improve social well-being.

Over the last few decades, there has been a rising emphasis on promoting ecologically friendly consumer behavior. This notion, also known as environmentally responsible consumer behavior, refers to a variety of acts aimed at conserving natural resources, mitigating environmental harm, and supporting societal green demands (Melissen, 2013). Pro-environmental behavior, defined as environmental protection or contribution to a healthy environment, is referred to by a variety of terms, including environmentally responsible behaviors, environmentally sustainable behaviors, and green behaviors. This aspect of pro-social consumption is thought to benefit the environment as well as society.

Sustainable consumption has arisen as a critical problem in the tourist and hospitality industries, where the environmental effect of activities and development is particularly significant (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2015; Sowamber et al., 2017). Consumers in this area increasingly seek eco-friendly products and services, driving up demand for ecologically responsible businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and airlines. In response, many tourist and hospitality organizations proactively incorporate sustainability into their operations, in line with

customers' increased knowledge and inclinations for environmental responsibility.

Tourism and the environment have a complicated connection, with stakeholders focused on environmentally sensitive and reliant tourism (Presenza et al., 2019). The UNWTO advocates for sustainable development that balances economic, social, and environmental issues (Hall, 2021). Despite travelers' support for sustainable tourism, there are obstacles in turning this support into actual sustainable behavior during vacations. Incentives, particularly those provided over the Internet, appear to be promising methods for encouraging sustainable behavior. Despite its immaturity, sustainable hospitality is seen as significant within the larger framework of sustainable tourism research.

Sustainability has developed as a critical strategic objective for destinations worldwide, aiming to protect the environment and foster social inclusion. Family businesses in the hotel and tourist industries are encouraged to improve their social responsibility initiatives using strategic tools, resources, and competencies (van Rheede & Blomme, 2012; Negruşa et al., 2015). Being ecologically and socially responsible is vital for hotels seeking a competitive cost advantage and increased community awareness. Hoteliers should include environmental and social factors into their strategic plans, supporting green human resource management methods and encouraging staff to participate in sustainable activities.

While hotel sustainability policies may not provide immediate financial benefits, they lead to improved social and environmental performance, which eventually has a favorable influence on financial outcomes (Khatter, 2023; Elkhwesky et al., 2022). Hotels that implement sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy, can cut carbon emissions while also fulfilling their obligation to protect the environment and promote economic and social fairness (Fernández-Robin et al., 2019). Overall, concentrating on sustainability is critical for hotels to gain market share, respond to societal concerns, reap reputational benefits, gain competitive advantages, and contribute to sustainability as a public good.

The rise in global temperatures by more than 0.5°C throughout the twentieth century, with forecasts forecasting further increases of 0.2 to 0.3°C each decade into the twenty-first century, has substantial consequences for the tourist sector (Agnew & Viner, 2001). The industry is strongly reliant on current climatic and environmental conditions, leaving it susceptible to the continued trend of rising temperatures. This vulnerability is undeniable in the ecosystems of numerous international tourism sites, with small island states suffering the most severe consequences of rising sea levels (Sajjad et al., 2014). Additional tourism-related impacts include coral bleaching, increased wildfire occurrences, changed animal and bird migratory patterns, floods, the spread of vector-borne illnesses, and shortened skiing seasons.

Without proper adaptation measures, the changing environment may cause a reassessment of the worldwide comparative attractiveness of tourism sites, thereby affecting economic dynamics (Rosselló-Nadal, 2014; Kitamura et al., 2020). According to the United Nations, over three million people travel internationally every day, with roughly 1.2 billion people going abroad each year, including personal travel and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE). 2017 was designated the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development" to raise awareness about tourism's role and influence on climate change. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognizes the importance of tourism's impact on global warming. It defines sustainable tourism as fully considering its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while meeting visitors' needs, the industry, the environment, and host communities.

The worldwide tourist sector has adopted "Tourism for SDGs," which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As shown in the "SDG compass," international trends call for adopting sustainability ideals in both developing and developed countries. Climate change, caused by rising carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels during the Industrial Revolution, has become irreversible, causing glaciers to melt across the planet, notably in locations such as Greenland and the Great Himalayas (Siddiqui & Imran, 2019). These climatic upheavals caused by human activity have far-reaching socioeconomic

consequences, with tourism emerging as a critical industry vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Alternative types of tourism evolved in developing nations throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s in reaction to the issues provided by mass tourism (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). These solutions attempted to prioritize natural and cultural resources in planning and development to conserve tourist sites' original rural attractiveness. Despite differences in nomenclature and models, these forms shared fundamental values of progress and conservation. They were mainly small-scale initiatives with cheap investments, a low-key and autonomous approach, and extensive local community engagement (Broad & Spencer, 2008). The primary objective was to improve relationships between locals and international tourists, resulting in a more accurate and meaningful experience for both.

The introduction of alternative tourism led to the progressive growth of numerous forms anchored in different parts of modern economic and social life. However, scholars have disagreed on how to interpret and define alternative tourism, with discussions over its broad nature and various classifications, often using terminology like ecotourism, sustainable tourism, or justice tourism interchangeably or as different kinds (Jovicic, 2016). Some researchers see alternative tourism as an umbrella word encompassing numerous tourist types or niche markets, adding to the classification's complexities.

Events play an important part in stimulating tourism, and most locations include them in their development and marketing plans (Getz, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016). The established roles and consequences of scheduled events in tourism are becoming increasingly crucial for destination competitiveness. However, only a few decades ago, the term 'event tourism' became widely accepted in both the tourist business and the scholarly community. The sector's subsequent expansion has been nothing short of phenomenal. Simultaneously, 'event management' has arisen as a fast-increasing professional sector, with visitors serving as a possible market for planned events and the tourism industry playing an essential role in their success and appeal (Laing, 2018). However, not all events must be tourism-related, raising worries about the possible negative

consequences of adopting a marketing focus. Aside from their role in tourism, events serve other vital roles, such as community building, urban redevelopment, cultural development, and creating national identities. This demonstrates that tourism is not the only partner or proponent in the multidimensional realm of events.

Medical tourism originated in the 18th century when wealthy individuals from undeveloped nations sought medical care in Europe and the United States (Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016). However, in the late twentieth century, particularly in the twenty-first century, the trend shifted as people from developed countries began traveling to developing countries for medical treatment, owing to factors such as an ageing population, a lack of insurance coverage, and rising domestic healthcare costs (Reddy et al., 2010; Sandberg, 2017). The globalization of communication and transportation technology aided this transition. The medical tourism sector has expanded rapidly, with hospitals and clinics in over thirty countries actively advertising themselves as medical tourism destinations. Despite its vastness, there is still little knowledge of essential elements and the industry's actual extent (Chuang et al., 2014). As part of the more significant trend of globalization and privatization, the medical tourism sector has grown significantly in Asian countries and other parts of the world. The rising costs of medical care, particularly in the United States, have been a significant driver of the industry's fast expansion, resulting in the outsourcing of medical procedures to nations with more cost-effective alternatives.

Sustainability in the tourist and hospitality industries is a diverse problem that includes obstacles, research projects, and possibilities. The serious environmental dangers created by human activities emphasize the importance of transitioning to ecologically friendly methods (Cheer & Lew, 2017). The promotion of ecologically sustainable consumer behavior, particularly in the tourist and hospitality industries, is a vital step in addressing these issues. As the industry grapples with the demand for environmentally sustainable products and services, businesses are increasingly pushing to adopt sustainability principles (Dłużewska, 2019). The study landscape for sustainability in hospitality and tourism illustrates significant issues and future opportunities, emphasizing the necessity for a thorough

grasp of the subject. The difficulty in converting tourists' support for sustainable tourism into real behavior necessitates novel measures, including using the Internet. As the sector evolves, stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners must work together to ensure a sustainable future for tourism and hospitality.

The current issue of Atna: Journal of Tourism Studies presents the pool of research articles covering varied aspects of sustainability in the tourism and hospitality industry and the advent of alternate forms of tourism.

Comparative research on visitor preferences for homestay locations in West Bengal, India, with an emphasis on Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim, was carried out by Dutta and Mukhopadhyay. They evaluated these destinations' respective competitive positions based on attraction diversity and homestay performance using the Attraction Diversity Index (ADI) and TOPSIS. Significant variations in visitor preferences were shown by the paired sample t-test, with Darjeeling coming out on top but still facing fierce competition. This highlights the need for targeted policy interventions in tourism.

Jacob et al. evaluate the sustainability of Uttarakhand's tourist industry. The study investigates the negative environmental effects of tourism-related activities while emphasizing the region's susceptibility to natural catastrophes. Using secondary data and primary interviews, the authors give a case study on Joshimath, highlighting the critical need for sustainable practices, community engagement, eco-friendly building, and effective waste management for the tourist industry's balanced and long-term future.

Sachdeva and Irshad present a thorough literature analysis that covers festival research from 2000 to 2021. The analysis examines the interaction of tourism, the event business, architecture, and urban planning to identify gaps in research on festival spaces. The paper's goal is to provide a complete overview of festival studies, establishing the framework for future study approaches.

Ramzan and Simon concentrate on the trends and patterns of tourism in India, with a particular emphasis on medical tourism. The study uses statistical tests and trend analysis to identify discrepancies across

states and socioeconomic categories. Contrary to prior research, they discover a larger engagement of disadvantaged populations in medical tourism, underlining the importance of policy attention and inclusive practices.

Khan et al. do a bibliometric analysis of sustainable practices in the hotel business. Using the PRISMA approach and the Scopus database, the authors identify trends and key sources in hotel sustainability research. The findings provide light on the thematic features of sustainable hotel operations and make recommendations for future study paths.

The effect of digital technology on India's tourist industry was studied by Johnpaul M and Jaya Prakashnarayana G. They examined consumer behavior and attitudes about acceptance of technology using the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). Despite the potential for economic development and employment, the results showed a digital gap among demographic groups, underscoring the unequal effects of digitalization on the economy and industries.

To conclude, this issue of Atna: Journal of Tourism Studies highlights the complex aspects and critical investigations into the current prospects and difficulties in the tourism and hospitality field. A richer scholarly discourse is produced by the different research, which ranges from the influence of the digital revolution on consumer behaviour in India to the sustainability difficulties encountered by Uttarakhand's tourist sector and the nuanced examination of festival studies. The scholarly landscape is further expanded by investigating medical tourism trends, sustainable hotel practices, and the necessity of responsible tourism in national park regions. These investigations establish the foundation for future study directions while also clarifying the situation. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers may employ the combination of theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and policy analyses in this issue as a scholarly compass to steer the tourism and hospitality industry toward a more resilient and sustainable future as the field develops.

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