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Editorial

Reimagining Sustainable Futures: Sustainability, Social Agency, and The Evolving Market Trends

The sustainability paradigm has undergone a fundamental transformation. In an era characterised by acute ecological crises and rapid technological advancement, reimagining sustainable futures necessitates more than incremental adjustments; it requires a comprehensive reconceptualisation of production, consumption, and coexistence frameworks (Duedahl, 2021). Conventional sustainability models frequently position environmental stewardship and economic development as inherently conflicting objectives, necessitating difficult trade-offs. This binary approach is now being supplanted by an integrative framework in which sustainability catalyses innovation, enhanced competitiveness, and social advancement (Shekhar, 2024). Principles such as circular economy models, regenerative agricultural practices, and clean energy transitions have transcended their status as alternative pathways to emerge as foundational economic imperatives. This paradigmatic evolution reflects a deeper recognition: sustainability extends beyond harm mitigation to encompass the creation of systems that actively restore and regenerate ecological integrity (Parmar & Murari, 2025). Organisations increasingly acknowledge that resource optimisation, waste minimisation, and sustainable procurement strategies constitute not merely ethical imperatives but strategic advantages that reduce operational costs, mitigate systemic risks, and unlock novel market opportunities.

The most significant developments in the sustainability movement are the rise of social agency—the collective power of individuals, communities, and organisations to drive systemic change. Consumers are increasingly using their purchasing power intentionally, demanding transparency about supply chains, labour practices, and environmental impacts (Navaratne, 2024). This shift has pushed corporations to move beyond greenwashing and make substantive commitments supported by measurable targets (Lashitew, 2021). Social movements, including youth climate activists and Indigenous land defenders, have successfully reframed sustainability as a justice issue that intersects with equity, human rights, and intergenerational responsibility. Their advocacy has shown that environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalised communities, making sustainability inseparable from social justice. This intersectional approach has expanded the coalition for change, transforming sustainability from an elite concern into a populist demand (Rastegar, 2025).

As social agency grows, digitalisation has intensified its reach, speed, and impact. Digital platforms and social media have amplified this agency, enabling rapid mobilisation, information sharing, and accountability mechanisms. When communities expose environmental violations or corporations fail to meet sustainability pledges, the reputational consequences are immediate and significant (Sabharwal, 2024). This democratisation of information has created a new accountability landscape where transparency is no longer optional. The market itself is undergoing tectonic shifts that both reflect and accelerate sustainability imperatives (Shrivastava & Bhusan, 2023). Investment capital is flowing toward companies with firm environmental, social, and governance (ESG) profiles, as institutional investors recognise that sustainability metrics are predictive of long-term performance and resilience. This reallocation of capital is creating powerful incentives for corporate transformation (Lin et al., 2024).

Market realignments are particularly evident in the energy and financial sectors. The clean energy revolution illustrates a significant trend in our economy. The costs of renewable energy have decreased dramatically, positioning solar and wind power not only as environmentally friendly but also economically advantageous in many situations. Electric vehicles are shifting from being mere novelties to becoming mainstream, with major automotive manufacturers committing to establishing fully electric fleets within the next two decades (Hailiang et al., 2023). Advances in battery technology and the growth of charging infrastructure are accelerating this transition more quickly than initially anticipated. Sustainable finance mechanisms—such as green bonds, impact investing, and sustainability-linked loans—have evolved from experimental tools into established asset classes, now managing trillions of dollars in investments. This financial framework is directing resources toward climate mitigation, renewable infrastructure, and sustainable development on an unprecedented scale (Lipu et al., 2022). Beyond energy and finance, these shifts are reshaping how value is created across industries. At the same time, regenerative business models are challenging traditional growth paradigms. Companies are exploring innovative approaches, such as product-as-a-service models, take-back programs, and designs intended for disassembly, all aimed at extending product lifecycles and minimising waste. The fashion industry's rental and resale markets, the electronics sector's refurbishment initiatives, and the food industry's upcycling innovations reflect a fundamental rethinking of value creation (Alhitmi et al., 2024).

Technological advancements play a critical role in enabling and accelerating these transformations, as innovation both enables sustainable solutions and disrupts unsustainable incumbents. Artificial intelligence and machine learning optimise energy grids, predict maintenance needs to extend equipment life, and identify efficiency opportunities invisible to

human analysis. Blockchain technology promises supply chain transparency, carbon credit verification, and decentralised renewable energy trading (Rane et al., 2024). In parallel, advances in biological and agricultural technologies are redefining material and food systems. Biotechnology is producing sustainable alternatives to resource-intensive materials, ranging from lab-grown leather to mushroom-based packaging and carbon-capturing concrete. Precision agriculture uses sensors, drones, and data analytics to minimise water usage, reduce chemical inputs, and increase yields on existing farmland, alleviating pressure to convert natural habitats. However, technology alone cannot solve sustainability challenges (Fatima et al., 2024). The digital economy's own footprint, encompassing data centres, cryptocurrency mining, and electronic waste, presents new sustainability challenges that require thoughtful solutions. Technology should be utilised within frameworks that prioritise equity, accessibility, and genuine environmental benefits over narrow efficiency metrics (Shabur, 2024). These complexities highlight the need for holistic and coordinated approaches. Reimagining sustainable futures requires integration across multiple dimensions. Environmental sustainability cannot be divorced from social equity or economic viability. Solutions must account for diverse contexts, recognising that pathways appropriate for developed economies may differ from those needed in developing regions where poverty alleviation remains urgent. Policy frameworks must evolve to support this transition—carbon pricing mechanisms that reflect actual environmental costs, regulations that incentivise circular practices, international cooperation on climate commitments, and just transition programs that support workers and communities affected by economic restructuring (Baxtishodovich, 2025).

Long-term transformation also depends on shifts in values, knowledge, and behaviour. Education and cultural transformation are essential for sustainability. Future generations must be equipped with systems thinking and ecological awareness, shifting cultural narratives from consumption to valuing sufficiency and collective well-being. Sustainable futures require ongoing choices today (Teoh et al., 2024). Social agency can influence corporate behaviour, and market trends are increasingly aligning economic incentives with environmental needs. However, we must clarify what sustainability means and assess our progress, as incremental changes within unsustainable systems are inadequate. The urgent challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion demand transformative action (Abdullah et al., 2024).

The opportunity before us is extraordinary: we have the chance to build economies that function within the Earth's limits while enhancing human welfare. We can create systems that regenerate rather than exploit resources and demonstrate that human ingenuity can address the problems it has created. This is not a naive optimism, but a recognition that when social

agency, market forces, and technological capabilities are correctly aligned, we can forge previously unimaginable pathways. Our sustainable futures will depend on our courage to question assumptions, our creativity to envision alternatives, and our commitment to act collectively. The question is not whether change will come, but whether we will guide it toward outcomes that honour both human dignity and ecological integrity. This reimagining starts now, with every decision, every innovation, and every act of social agency that chooses regeneration over exploitation, sufficiency over excess, and shared futures over individual gain. (Achmad et al., 2023).

The current issue of the Atna Journal of Tourism Studies presents a collection of research articles covering various aspects of sustainability in the hospitality industry and the emergence of alternative forms of tourism.

Edeh et al. investigate sustainable tourism and Destination Resilience in Nigeria's tourism sector, focusing on their relationship in southeastern Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey of 184 respondents from eight destinations and PLS-SEM analysis, the findings reveal a significant positive relationship between sustainable tourism and destination resilience in the study area.

Mir et al. explore landscape component preferences among 500 respondents in the Kashmir Region, India. Vegetation received the highest preference score, followed by heritage, landform, water, and built form. Significant differences were found among visitor origin groups and between genders, except for built form, indicating varied landscape perceptions among visitors.

Kumar and Bhinder discusses the Impact of Curriculum Components on the employability potential of undergraduate tourism students in North India. Data from 360 students were analysed using EFA, CFA, and SEM. Results show that generic and functional-area skills have a significant, positive influence on students' employability potential in tourism education.

Shah explores sacred-secular tourism practices at the Baba Rishi Shrine in Kashmir using surveys and in-depth interviews. Findings show visitors engage in both sacred and secular activities within the same visit. The study concludes that sacred and secular tourism are interconnected, continuous, and complementary rather than dichotomous.

Kumar et al. examine 251 articles from the Scopus database (2003-April 2025) on sustainable wine tourism. Italy leads with 46 publications (18.3%), followed by Portugal (28) and Spain (22). The most cited keyword is "Viticulture" (56 occurrences). Sustainability (Switzerland) published 78 articles. A study reveals an increasing interest in biodiversity conservation and sustainable practices. Research is dominated by Social Sciences (176

documents), Energy (102), and Environmental Science (135). Santiago-Brown et al. have the highest citations (69).

Thukral's study utilises linear algebra and quantitative techniques to estimate the female workforce in tourism-related industries at a granular level, leveraging macro-level government data. Using TSA 2015-16 data, the mathematical model employs Hadamard Product matrices across 30 states and 11 industries. The results estimate approximately 31.75 lakh females to be directly employed in the tourism sector in 2023. Rajasthan (4.26 lakhs), Uttar Pradesh (3.72 lakhs), and Gujarat (3.59 lakhs) lead. Techniques address data gaps for policy-making.

Gautam and Sharma evaluate emerging trends and insights in homestay tourism through Quantitative Analysis and Future Agenda. Bibliometric analysis examines 349 publications from Scopus (1977-2025) on homestay tourism. Malaysia leads with 97 documents, followed by the United States (52) and China (43). The most prolific author is Kayat with 107 citations and an h-index of 5. Co-occurrence analysis identifies six clusters: tourism development, sustainable development, eco-tourism, human/risk factors, tourism/community-based tourism, and rural tourism. A word cloud reveals an emphasis on tourism development, markets, destinations, and ecotourism across multiple countries.

Saravanan et al. examine 102 Pollachi Railway Station (NSG-5 category) passengers. The awareness index indicates that 61.80% of respondents are moderately aware of railway services. Results indicate that education up to higher secondary, income up to ₹15,000, and income above ₹50,001, as well as awareness of intermodality and technological features, and perceived service value, positively influence railway preference. Regression analysis reveals that 55% of the variance in preference is explained by awareness and demographic variables. Female, unmarried, nuclear family passengers show higher awareness.

Bhutia et al. investigate responsible tourism practices and community involvement in Darap, Sikkim, and the role of local communities in ecotourism development through a mixed-methods approach involving 150 respondents (125 surveys and 25 focus group discussions) collected between January and May 2021. Results show 48.2% respondents are employed in the tourism industry. Residents perceive Darap as having significant potential for responsible ecotourism development. However, community contribution to ecotourism growth remains insignificant. The main obstacles include limited funds, knowledge gaps, and the lack of ongoing training and capacity-building programs on responsible tourism practices.

Matlani et al. analyse how physical and virtual tourism contribute to the formalisation of India's informal sectors, including handlooms, handicrafts,

leather, jute, and the gig economy. The study uses semi-structured interviews with 78 artisans from Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, and Kanpur. Cross-sectional regression analysis across ten Indian states for 2021-22 reveals that tourism and loan access have a positive impact on sectoral income. The correlation coefficients between tourism and GVA (0.749) and between loan access and GVA (0.888) indicate strong positive relationships.

Chettri and Singh assess the revival of Intangible Cultural Heritage through Sustainable Tourism. The Case of the Kholey Dai Festival. This mixed-methods study examines the Kholey Dai Festival in Parengtar village, located in the Kalimpong district of West Bengal. It employs qualitative interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and quantitative surveys (n = 150 visitors). The festival attracted over 3,000 visitors in 2024, generating revenue of ₹920,000. The findings reveal that the festival revitalises traditional music, dances, and agrarian rituals, while also implementing a zero-waste policy that produced only 3.2 kg of non-recyclable waste. Regression analysis reveals that the homestay experience, cultural motivation, and sustainability awareness are significant predictors of visitor satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$)

To conclude, this issue of ATNA presents a comprehensive exploration of sustainability across diverse tourism contexts, demonstrating that sustainable futures emerge through the convergence of social agency, market innovation, and community engagement. The collection reveals how sustainable tourism transcends environmental preservation to encompass destination resilience, cultural heritage revitalisation, workforce empowerment, and equitable development. From Nigeria's destination resilience to Kashmir's sacred-secular tourism practices, from India's festival tourism to Sikkim's responsible ecotourism initiatives, these studies collectively illustrate that sustainability is fundamentally an integrative endeavour requiring coordinated action across stakeholders. The research underscores that transformative change in tourism depends not merely on technological solutions or policy frameworks, but on reimagining value creation itself, prioritising regeneration over extraction, community well-being over mere economic metrics, and long-term resilience over short-term gains. These contributions provide valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers committed to shaping tourism's sustainable trajectory.

Bindi Varghese
Associate Editor

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