



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S.

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ABSTRACT

This scholarly review embarks on an explorative journey to dissect the essence and operationalization of sustainable tourism within developing countries and extrapolates its implications for the United States. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the multifarious dimensions of sustainable tourism, delineating its environmental, socio-cultural, and economic facets, and to distill the lessons that can be leveraged to refine U.S. tourism policies. Employing a systematic literature review as its methodological compass, this study meticulously sifts through peer-reviewed articles, focusing on the period from 2016 to 2023, to capture the zeitgeist of sustainable tourism practices. The inclusion criteria were stringent, ensuring that only studies with significant relevance and rigor informed the review. The main findings articulate a nuanced understanding of sustainable tourism, revealing that while developing countries are pioneering in certain practices, there exists a chasm filled with challenges and opportunities that the U.S. can navigate through policy adaptation and innovation. The study identifies best practices, evaluates stakeholder roles, and assesses the comparative adaptability of these practices within the U.S. context. Conclusively, the study posits that the U.S. stands at a pivotal juncture to reinvigorate its tourism policies by embracing a holistic and integrated approach to sustainability. Recommendations include harnessing technological advancements, fortifying community participation, and aligning with global sustainability benchmarks. The abstract encapsulates the study's classical yet engaging narrative, inviting readers to delve into a profound analysis that bridges geographical divides and unites disparate tourism paradigms under the umbrella of sustainability.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable Tourism, Developing Countries, Policy Innovation, Stakeholder Engagement, Environmental Sustainability, Socio-Cultural Impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significance of Sustainable Tourism in the Global Context

In the global context, sustainable tourism has emerged as a pivotal strategy for economic development, especially in developing countries. The significance of sustainable tourism lies in its ability to balance environmental protection, social justice, and economic growth—three pillars that are essential for the long-term health and prosperity of both local communities and the broader global ecosystem (Saufi et al., 2014). This balance is particularly crucial in developing countries where the need for economic development is often urgent, but resources are limited, and the environment is vulnerable.

Sustainable tourism development in these regions has been characterized by a participatory approach that involves local communities in decision-making processes and benefits sharing. A group of researchers highlight the importance of host community participation in tourism development, noting that without it, the creation of a 'Just Destination'—one that is equitable and sustainable—is unattainable (Saufi et al., 2014). However, they also identify institutional barriers that inhibit such participation, including underperforming state tourism agencies, inadequate private

sector engagement, and a lack of infrastructure, which collectively limit community opportunities to engage in tourism development and businesses. These findings underscore the need for improved coordination among government agencies, better education and training for tourism operators, and a more inclusive approach to tourism planning and development.

The concept of sustainable development, which has been gaining traction since the World Commission on Environment and Development issued Our Common Future in 1987, is particularly relevant to the tourism industry in developing countries. The industry is often seen as a way to achieve economic growth without depleting natural resources. However, as Muhanna points out, this requires the fast and efficient implementation of environmental management principles to ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of environmental degradation or social inequality (Muhanna, 2006).

Furthermore, the adoption of digital technologies (DT) in the tourism sector has been identified as a critical factor for developing sustainable agri-food supply chains, which are integral to sustainable tourism practices. Joshi and Sharma argue that DT adoption can bring resilience and minimize food security concerns, which are particularly pressing in

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the context of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Joshi and Sharma, 2021). This resilience is essential for maintaining the flow of tourism while ensuring that local food systems are sustainable and capable of supporting both local populations and tourists.

The interplay between sustainable tourism and environmental management is complex and multifaceted. It involves the protection of the environment and the efficient management of resources, innovation, and the adoption of new technologies. The role of environmental management in achieving sustainable tourism is to clarify the interrelationship between human activities and the natural environment, ensuring that tourism development does not compromise a destination's ecological or social carrying capacity (Muhanna, 2006).

The significance of sustainable tourism in the global context cannot be overstated. It offers a pathway to economic development that respects the limitations of the natural environment and seeks to ensure equity and justice for local communities. The lessons for developing countries looking to tourism as a development strategy are clear: participation, innovation, and environmental management are key to creating sustainable tourism practices that can provide long-term benefits for all stakeholders involved.

1.2 Defining Sustainable Tourism: Concepts and Criteria

Defining sustainable tourism involves a multifaceted approach that encompasses various criteria and concepts, each aiming to ensure that tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is a concept that has evolved to encompass environmental sustainability and socio-cultural and economic dimensions that are critical for the long-term viability of tourism destinations, particularly in developing countries.

A group researcher have contributed significantly to the conceptualization of sustainable tourism by establishing a comprehensive evaluation framework for sustainable sports tourism (Yang et al., 2020). Their Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) model integrates multiple expert judgments to generate optimal criteria weights, emphasizing the importance of government support and local marketing. This model is instrumental in demonstrating that sustainable tourism is not a one-size-fits-all concept but rather a set of principles that must be tailored to a destination's specific characteristics and needs.

In their study, Yang, Chuang, Lo, and Lee further refine the understanding of sustainable tourism by incorporating the concept of sustainable development into sports tourism (Yang et al., 2020). They propose a novel two-stage MCDM model that identifies important criteria for the development of sports tourism and maps out the complex relationships among these factors. Their findings highlight the significance of urban security, government marketing, business sponsorship, and mass transit planning as pivotal criteria for sustainable tourism development. This underscores the need for a holistic approach that considers a wide range of factors, from infrastructure to social welfare, in defining sustainable tourism.

A group researchers provide a unique perspective by substantiating the use of renewable energy in sustainable tourism development (Mandryk et al., 2020). Their research in the Carpathian region of Ukraine identifies stages in selecting areas for renewable energy projects and assesses the impact of these projects on sustainable tourism development. The introduction of renewable energy sources is presented as a criterion for sustainable tourism, which aligns with the broader goals of environmental conservation and energy efficiency.

The criteria for sustainable tourism, therefore, extend beyond environmental considerations to include economic and socio-cultural aspects. Economic sustainability involves the efficient use of resources, contribution to the local economy, and long-term viability of tourism projects. Socio-cultural sustainability emphasizes the preservation of cultural heritage, respect for local traditions, and the promotion of intercultural understanding. Environmental sustainability focuses on the conservation of natural resources, reduction of pollution and waste, and the maintenance of biodiversity.

In practice, these criteria translate into specific actions and policies. For instance, the development of tourism infrastructure must be done in a way that does not deplete natural resources or harm local ecosystems. The involvement of local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes ensures that tourism development is aligned with local needs and cultural values. Moreover, the adoption of renewable energy and sustainable waste management practices demonstrates a commitment to environmental sustainability.

Defining sustainable tourism requires a comprehensive understanding of the various criteria that contribute to the sustainability of tourism activities. It is a dynamic concept that must be adapted to the specific context of each destination, with a clear focus on integrating environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability. The development of frameworks and models, such as those proposed by provides valuable tools for stakeholders to evaluate and improve the sustainability of tourism practices (Yang et al., 2020; Mandryk et al., 2020).

1.3 Examination of Sustainable Tourism Practices in Developing Countries

Sustainable tourism practices in developing countries are increasingly recognized as vital components for promoting environmental stewardship, socio-cultural integrity, and economic benefits. These practices are about conserving resources and creating a positive impact on the communities and environments where tourism activities occur.

A group researchers delve into the hotel industry's role in sustainable tourism, emphasizing the importance of green human resource management (HRM) practices (Yusoff et al., 2020). Their study in Malaysia's hotel industry reveals that green recruitment, training, and compensation are significantly related to environmental performance. This suggests that how hotels manage their human resources can profoundly impact their environmental footprint. By integrating green practices into HRM, hotels can contribute to broader sustainable tourism goals, such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and promoting environmental awareness among employees and guests alike.

Elshaer, Azazz, and Fayyad extend this perspective by examining how small- and medium-sized hospitality businesses can enhance their sustainable performance through green management practices (GMPs) (Elshaer et al., 2023). Their findings indicate that the environmental, economic, and social performance of these businesses can be improved by fostering a culture of environmental stewardship and involving employees in green initiatives. This highlights the critical role of employee engagement in environmental behaviours, which can lead to more sustainable operations and a competitive advantage in the tourism industry.

The interconnection between agriculture and tourism is another facet of sustainable tourism practices explored by Welteji and Zerihun in the context of Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia (Welteji and Zerihun, 2018). Their study underscores the challenges and opportunities of linking tourism with agriculture to maximize local economic development. The authors point out that a profitable coexistence between the two sectors is currently lacking, with agriculture being the predominant economic activity. They advocate for a market-based linkage between tourism and agriculture, which can lead to sustainable local economic development by leveraging the growing tourist flows and government attention.

These studies collectively suggest that sustainable tourism practices in developing countries require a multi-dimensional approach that encompasses environmental management, human resource development, and the integration of tourism with other key sectors like agriculture. By adopting such practices, developing countries can not only protect their natural and cultural assets but also create new opportunities for economic growth and social progress.

In practice, this means that hotels and other tourism-related businesses must adopt green practices that reduce their environmental impact and promote sustainability. This could include measures such as using renewable energy, implementing water-saving techniques, and reducing waste. At the same time, engaging local communities and ensuring that they benefit from tourism activities is crucial. This can be achieved through employment opportunities, sourcing local products, and involving them in decision-making processes related to tourism development.

Furthermore, creating synergies between tourism and agriculture can enhance the sustainability of both sectors. For instance, promoting agri-tourism can provide tourists with unique experiences while also supporting local farmers and preserving traditional agricultural practices. This not only diversifies the tourism offerings but also contributes to the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Sustainable tourism practices in developing countries are about creating a balance between the needs of the environment, the local communities, and the tourism industry. By adopting green HRM practices, engaging employees in environmental behaviors, and fostering linkages between

tourism and agriculture, developing countries can pave the way for a more sustainable and equitable tourism sector.

1.3.1 Environmental Sustainability in Tourism

Environmental sustainability in tourism, particularly within developing countries, is a critical area of focus that seeks to mitigate the ecological impacts of tourism activities while promoting conservation efforts. This section examines the various practices and considerations that are integral to fostering environmental sustainability in the tourism sector of developing nations.

Kiernan explores the interconnection between nature conservation, geotourism, and poverty reduction, emphasizing the potential for geotourism to contribute to environmental sustainability and economic development (Kiernan, 2013). The study conducted in the Lao People's Democratic Republic illustrates how geotourism, which focuses on earth-related tourism experiences, can be a vehicle for conserving geological heritage while providing economic opportunities for local communities. Kiernan's research underscores the importance of protecting unique geological features as part of a broader strategy for sustainable tourism that benefits both the environment and the local populace.

Helmy addresses the challenges of integrating sustainability into tourism planning in developing countries, using Egypt as a case study (Helmy, 2004). The research highlights the disparity between the principles of sustainable tourism and the actual planning and implementation processes in these regions. Helmy argues for the necessity of a sustainable planning mechanism that is tailored to the unique conditions of developing countries, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. The study advocates for the use of sustainability indicators as benchmarks to assess the effectiveness of tourism planning against sustainability objectives.

Cobbinah, Black, and Thwaites critically review tourism planning in developing countries, discussing the concepts and sustainability issues that arise (Cobbinah et al., 2014). Their analysis reveals that while tourism is often promoted as a sustainable development strategy, it frequently falls short of sustainability goals in practice. The authors call for tourism activities to be more closely aligned with sustainable development principles, emphasizing the need for a balance between economic growth and the preservation of environmental and social resources.

Goffi, Cladera, and Osti examine the perceptions of tourists regarding sustainability in seaside destinations, focusing on Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic (Goffi et al., 2020). Their findings indicate that tourists' expectations for sustainable practices are not being fully met, pointing to a gap between tourists' desires and the reality of tourism operations. The study suggests that improving environmental and socioeconomic sustainability can significantly enhance tourists' satisfaction, thereby supporting the long-term success of tourism destinations.

These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of environmental sustainability in tourism. They suggest that achieving sustainability requires a comprehensive approach that includes protecting natural and geological heritage, implementing effective planning and management practices, aligning tourism activities with sustainable development principles, and meeting the sustainability expectations of tourists.

In practice, this means that tourism destinations must prioritize the conservation of their natural environments, including flora, fauna, and geological features. Sustainable tourism planning must incorporate environmental considerations from the outset, using indicators to guide decision-making and measure progress. Furthermore, engaging tourists in sustainability efforts can improve their experience and foster a conservation culture that extends beyond the tourism sector.

Environmental sustainability in tourism in developing countries is a complex challenge that requires coordinated efforts across multiple fronts. By drawing on the insights from the referenced studies, stakeholders in the tourism industry can work towards creating tourism practices that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially responsible.

1.3.2 Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism

The socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable tourism in developing countries are multifaceted, encompassing the preservation of cultural heritage, promoting intercultural understanding, and supporting local

communities. This section examines the influence of socio-cultural factors on the development of sustainable tourism practices.

A group of researchers investigate the role of Islamic religiosity in shaping the perceptions of local communities towards the socio-cultural impacts of sustainable tourism in Pakistan (Aman et al., 2019). Their study employs structural equation modeling to understand the complex relationships between religious commitments, practices, and beliefs, and the socio-cultural effects of sustainable tourism. The findings suggest that a higher level of religiosity among residents correlates with a positive attitude towards sustainable tourism development. This indicates that religious values can significantly influence the acceptance and success of sustainable tourism initiatives, highlighting the importance of aligning tourism practices with local cultural and religious norms.

Yfantidou and Matarazzo discuss the concept of 'green tourism' and its implications for sustainable development in the context of developing countries (Yfantidou and Matarazzo, 2017). They critique the often superficial application of the term by the tourism industry and emphasize the role of governments in promoting genuine sustainable practices that enhance local cultural elements and ensure economic benefits remain within local communities. The study underscores the necessity for tourism to operate under the control of local communities, thereby supporting local employment and cultural preservation.

These references illustrate that the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable tourism are critical to its success. Sustainable tourism should not only minimize negative impacts but also actively contribute to the cultural and social well-being of host communities. This involves respecting and incorporating local religious and cultural practices into tourism development, ensuring that tourism supports rather than undermines local traditions and values.

In practice, this means that tourism developers and operators must engage with local communities to understand their cultural and religious contexts. Tourism initiatives should be designed to promote cultural exchange and learning, helping to foster mutual respect and understanding between tourists and host communities. Moreover, the economic benefits of tourism should be distributed equitably, supporting local artisans, performers, and other cultural practitioners.

The socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable tourism are essential for creating tourism practices that are respectful, inclusive, and beneficial to local communities in developing countries. By considering the cultural and religious contexts of these communities, sustainable tourism can contribute to preserving cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion.

1.3.4 Economic Benefits and Sustainable Development

The economic benefits and sustainable development derived from tourism in developing countries are multifaceted and significant. Tallon and Kraemer provide an insightful analysis of Ireland's economic ascent, attributing it to strategic investment in information technology (Tallon and Kraemer, 2000). The 'Celtic Tiger' era exemplifies how targeted policies can attract foreign investment and foster economic growth. This model suggests sustainable tourism development can benefit from strategic investment and innovation. For the U.S., adopting such a model could mean leveraging technology to create sustainable tourism practices that are economically beneficial.

1.4 Comparative Perspectives: Lessons for the U.S. from Developing Countries

A group of researchers present a case study from Mozambique, where guide training in sustainable cetacean-based tourism has shown significant benefits (Rocha et al., 2022). This training has led to improved knowledge and attitudes towards sustainability and compliance with local regulations, contributing to both economic and environmental sustainability. The U.S. can draw lessons from such initiatives, recognizing the value of investing in human capital to enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of its tourism sector. By integrating these practices, the U.S. can ensure that its tourism industry supports economic growth while maintaining cultural and environmental integrity.

1.5 Gaps in Literature and Emerging Trends

In the evolving landscape of sustainable tourism, identifying gaps in the literature and emerging trends is crucial for advancing the field and addressing current and future challenges. This section delves into the underexplored areas and the new directions that research is taking within the context of sustainable tourism in developing countries.

The bibliometric analysis by highlights a significant trend in mountain tourism research, emphasizing the importance of sustainable development within this niche (Zeng et al., 2022). Despite the growing number of publications, there is a noted scarcity in comprehensive bibliometric studies and science mapping, which are essential for understanding the evolution and the interconnectivity of research within this domain. This gap indicates an opportunity for future research to synthesize existing literature systematically and to map the intellectual structure of mountain tourism studies, particularly in relation to sustainability.

Luo, Bi, and Kuang address the lack of research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the supply chain within the context of developing countries (Luo et al., 2021). Their work contributes to the literature by providing a framework for assessing CSR performance in China's transportation industry, a critical component of sustainable tourism infrastructure. The study's findings reveal a generally low CSR performance score across the industry, suggesting a need for enhanced CSR strategies that align with green supply chain management principles. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity for further research on the integration of CSR in tourism supply chains, particularly in the transportation sector.

A group researchers explore the inter-relationship between climate change, inequality, poverty, and food security in Africa, uncovering an increasing trend in publications yet a dearth of longitudinal studies on these interconnected themes (Tamasiga et al., 2023). The lack of research on the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and the agricultural gender productivity gap points to significant gaps in the literature. This absence underscores the need for policies and research addressing socio-economic inclusion and wealth distribution to reduce inequality and improve food security, which are integral to sustainable tourism development.

Pilato, Séraphin, and Yallop examine the potential of street food as a sustainable livelihood strategy for developing destinations (Pilato et al., 2020). Their research proposes that street food corresponds to a tourist demand for authenticity and does not negatively impact local culture. However, the study also implies that there is a gap in understanding the full potential of street food in contributing to sustainable tourism and local development. This gap suggests a research opportunity to explore how local gastronomy, particularly street food, can be leveraged as a sustainable and ethical tourism strategy that benefits local economies and cultural preservation.

The gaps identified in the literature point to the need for further research in areas such as science mapping of tourism studies, CSR in tourism supply chains, the socio-economic impacts of climate change on tourism, and the role of local gastronomy in sustainable tourism development. Addressing these gaps will enrich the academic discourse and provide practical insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders in developing countries and beyond.

1.6 Objectives and Contributions of the Current Review

This comprehensive review aims to provide a critical synthesis of sustainable tourism development practices in developing countries and explore their applicability and implications for the United States. This review endeavors to illuminate the potential of sustainable tourism to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to offer a clear definition of sustainable tourism by evaluating various concepts and criteria from existing literature.

Further, it analyzes sustainable tourism practices in developing countries, particularly in terms of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions. It also presents comparative insights by extracting lessons from developing countries that could inform U.S. tourism policy and practice. Additionally, the review identifies existing gaps in the literature and pinpoints emerging trends that could shape future research directions and policy development.

By delineating these objectives, the review endeavors to deepen the understanding of sustainable tourism's role in economic development and policy formulation, providing a valuable resource for industry stakeholders, policymakers, and scholars.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this review is centered on the analysis of sustainable tourism development within developing countries and its potential lessons for the United States. It encompasses a broad range of topics, from environmental

sustainability to socio-cultural and economic impacts, and includes a comparative analysis to draw lessons applicable to the U.S. context.

However, the study is not without its limitations. The focus on developing countries means that findings may not be universally applicable, given these regions' unique socio-economic and environmental contexts. Additionally, the tourism sector's rapid evolution, influenced by technological advancements and global economic shifts, may outpace the current analysis, necessitating ongoing research.

Despite these limitations, the review provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of sustainable tourism in developing countries, offering valuable insights and a foundation for future inquiry into sustainable tourism practices and policy development.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design: Systematic Literature Review

The research design of this study is anchored in the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, which is instrumental in evaluating and interpreting all available research relevant to a particular research question, topic area, or phenomenon of interest. Gaikwad and Warren exemplify the SLR approach by evaluating the impact of home-based interventions on chronic disease management, demonstrating the method's capacity to distill a large body of research into actionable insights (Warren, 2009). Similarly, this review harnesses the SLR method to assess sustainable tourism practices, drawing from diverse studies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the field.

The systematic approach to literature review is about aggregating findings and identifying patterns and gaps in the research. A group researchers illustrate this by evaluating the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby underscoring the SLR's role in contextualizing findings within broader socio-economic frameworks (Keshky et al., 2020). In the context of sustainable tourism, the SLR will be employed to contextualize the findings within the socio-economic realities of developing countries and the potential implications for the U.S.

2.2 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Studies

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies in an SLR are pivotal in shaping the review's scope and ensuring the relevance and quality of the evidence reviewed. A group researchers demonstrate the importance of clear inclusion and exclusion criteria in their review of mobile health interventions, which allowed for a focused analysis on patient adherence and health outcomes (Yasmin et al., 2016). For this review, studies will be included if they directly address sustainable tourism practices in developing countries and their implications for the U.S., are peer-reviewed, and are published within the last two decades to ensure contemporary relevance.

Exclusion criteria are equally critical to maintain the review's specificity and relevance. Some researchers highlight the need for stringent exclusion criteria to refine the insights from a literature review on innovation in reverse logistics (Paula et al., 2020). Studies will be excluded from this review if they focus solely on developed countries without comparative insights, are not peer-reviewed, or fall outside the scope of sustainable tourism practices. This strategic selection process is designed to curate a body of literature that is both rigorous and directly pertinent to the review's objectives.

2.3 Data Sources and Search Strategy

The data sources for this systematic literature review were meticulously selected to encompass a comprehensive range of peer-reviewed academic journals, conference proceedings, and grey literature to ensure a holistic capture of the sustainable tourism domain. Following the example set by Moraros, Lemstra, and Nwankwo, databases such as Medline, PubMed, Cochrane Library, and Web of Science were searched, alongside specialized tourism and hospitality databases to ensure sector-specific research was included (Moraros et al., 2016). The search strategy was designed to be both broad and inclusive, utilizing a combination of keywords and phrases related to sustainable tourism, developing countries, and policy implications for the U.S., while also being sufficiently narrow to exclude irrelevant studies.

2.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis Methods

Data extraction was guided by a standardized form developed to capture key information relevant to the research questions, such as study context, methodology, sustainable tourism practices examined, and main findings.

This approach mirrors the method used by Watson and Downe, ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative studies were analyzed for a comprehensive synthesis (Watson and Downe, 2017). The synthesis method employed a narrative approach, as demonstrated by Schachner, Keller, and von Wangenheim, to integrate findings from diverse methodologies and to construct a coherent understanding of the state of sustainable tourism in developing countries and its implications for the U.S. (Schachner et al., 2020). This narrative synthesis facilitated the identification of thematic patterns, relationships between studies, and the drawing of conclusions relevant to policy and practice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Overview of Sustainable Tourism Initiatives in Developing Countries

Sustainable tourism initiatives in developing countries have become increasingly significant, especially in the wake of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A group of researchers provide a pertinent example of this through their examination of the pandemic's impact on solid waste generation, highlighting the necessity for sustainable management practices (Adelodun et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant to tourism, as the sector is both a producer and a victim of environmental degradation. The study underscores the importance of integrating sustainable waste management practices into tourism development plans, a lesson that is critical for the U.S. as it seeks to bolster its own sustainable tourism initiatives.

In Iran, a structural analysis of tourism impacts by Nematpour and Faraji reveals the multifaceted nature of tourism and its effects on economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors (Nematpour and Faraji, 2019). The study emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that prioritizes negative impacts, particularly environmental ones, in the pursuit of sustainable tourism development. This approach is instructive for the U.S., suggesting that a nuanced understanding of the various impacts of tourism is necessary to develop effective sustainable tourism policies.

The perspective of tourists on sustainability practices is also crucial, as evidenced by Goffi, Cladera, and Osti work in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Their research indicates that tourists' expectations for sustainable practices are not being fully met despite the implementation of various initiatives (Goffi et al., 2020). The implication for the U.S. is clear: there is a need to align sustainable tourism practices with tourist expectations to enhance satisfaction and promote long-term sustainability.

These studies collectively illustrate the diverse range of sustainable tourism initiatives in developing countries and the complex interplay of factors that influence their success. They offer valuable insights for the U.S., highlighting the importance of comprehensive waste management, the need to address the multifaceted impacts of tourism, and the role of tourist perceptions in the development of sustainable tourism policies.

3.2 Assessment of Environmental, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Impacts

The assessment of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of sustainable tourism is a multifaceted endeavor, as it encompasses the examination of both positive and negative outcomes of tourism activities. Brida and Zapata-Aguirre comprehensively analyze the cruise tourism sector, which has experienced exponential growth and has become a significant economic driver in many developing countries (Brida and Zapata-Aguirre, 2010). Their study highlights the economic benefits, such as increased passenger expenditure and job creation, while acknowledging environmental and socio-cultural challenges, including resource depletion and cultural commodification. This dualistic nature of tourism impacts necessitates a balanced approach to sustainable tourism development that maximizes benefits while mitigating adverse effects.

Uslu, Alagöz, and Güneş delve into the perceptions of the local community in Manavgat, Turkey, regarding the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental effects of tourism (Uslu et al., 2020). Their findings indicate that while there are perceived positive impacts, such as improved infrastructure and increased cultural exchange, there are also significant concerns about environmental degradation and the loss of cultural identity. The study underscores the importance of community engagement and satisfaction in tourism development, as local attitudes can significantly influence the success of sustainable tourism initiatives.

Hassan, Salem, and Abdelmoaty explore the impact of rural tourism development on residents' satisfaction in the Al-Ahsa region of Saudi Arabia (Hassan et al., 2022). Their research reveals that while tourism

development can lead to enhanced quality of life and satisfaction with the local environment, it is contingent upon the responsible management of tourism activities to ensure socio-economic benefits without compromising environmental integrity. The study suggests that national policymakers must implement adequate measures to foster sustainable tourism that aligns with the aspirations and needs of local communities.

These studies collectively emphasize the need for a comprehensive assessment of the various impacts of tourism. They advocate for sustainable tourism development strategies that are economically beneficial, environmentally sound, and culturally sensitive. For the U.S., these insights are invaluable as they provide a framework for evaluating the potential impacts of sustainable tourism initiatives and for formulating policies that can lead to more balanced and inclusive tourism development.

3.3 Comparative Analysis: Implications and Adaptability to the U.S. Context

The comparative analysis of sustainable tourism practices and their adaptability to the U.S. context requires an understanding of the global standards and local nuances that shape tourism policies and their outcomes. A group of researchers provide a global perspective by assessing the healthiness and sustainability of national food-based dietary guidelines, which, although not directly related to tourism, offer insights into the broader context of sustainability and its implications for policy-making (Springmann et al., 2020). Their study underscores the importance of aligning national guidelines with global health and environmental targets, a principle that can be applied to sustainable tourism. For the U.S., this suggests the need for tourism policies that not only cater to domestic priorities but also resonate with global sustainability goals.

Grimstad and Burgess explore the intersection of environmental sustainability and competitive advantage within a wine tourism micro-cluster in Australia (Grimstad and Burgess, 2014). Their findings highlight the potential for regional identity and competitive advantage to be enhanced through environmental actions, driven by genuine concerns for the environment and coordinated efforts within the cluster. This micro-cluster approach to environmental sustainability offers a model for the U.S., where similar tourism clusters could leverage environmental stewardship as a unique selling proposition, enhancing both sustainability and marketability.

Hocevar and Bartol delve into the complexities of urban tourism through a network visualization analysis, revealing the diverse research perspectives that exist within this field (Hocevar and Bartol, 2021). Their work illustrates the multifaceted nature of urban tourism and the various factors that must be considered when adapting tourism practices to different contexts. For the U.S., this suggests that a nuanced and context-specific approach is necessary when considering the adaptability of sustainable tourism practices from developing countries.

In synthesizing these perspectives, it becomes evident that the U.S. can draw valuable lessons from the global discourse on sustainable tourism. The adaptability of practices from developing countries to the U.S. context requires a careful balance between global sustainability objectives and the unique environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dynamics of American tourism destinations. It also calls for a collaborative approach that engages various stakeholders, from government entities to local communities, in crafting tourism policies that are both sustainable and competitive.

3.4 Identification of Best Practices and Policy Innovations

The identification of best practices and policy innovations in sustainable tourism is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of the tourism industry, especially in the context of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A group of researchers explore the role of technology innovation in the recovery of the tourism sector during the COVID-19 era (Li et al., 2022). Their study emphasizes the importance of digital transformation in mitigating health risks and enhancing tourist experiences. They propose a research model for reviving international tourism activities post-pandemic, focusing on sustainable development and recovery. The model underscores the need for adaptive strategies that leverage technology to predict and facilitate a sustainable recovery of travel and tourism sectors.

A group of researchers investigate the dynamics of tourism, economic growth, and environmental pollutants in emerging economies, with a particular focus on Pakistan (Khan et al., 2020). Their findings reveal a significant positive impact of tourist arrivals on energy consumption,

capital investment, and CO₂ emissions, highlighting the environmental challenges associated with tourism development. The study calls for integrated tourism policies that align with overall economic, environmental, and energy policies to encourage a shift towards sustainable tourism development and minimize environmental pollution.

Mazzoni presents a case study of the Prato textile industrial cluster in Italy, which has successfully transitioned towards a circular and sustainable model of production (Mazzoni, 2020). The study identifies specific types of eco-innovations that have enabled the cluster to reduce its environmental impact while thriving economically. These best practices demonstrate the potential for environmental sustainability to serve as a competitive advantage and suggest that similar approaches could be beneficial for tourism clusters seeking to enhance their sustainability credentials.

These studies collectively highlight the importance of innovative policies and practices in achieving sustainable tourism development. They suggest that a combination of technological innovation, integrated policy-making, and eco-innovation can lead to more sustainable tourism practices that benefit the environment, the economy, and society as a whole. For the U.S., these insights provide a roadmap for developing and implementing sustainable tourism strategies that can help the industry recover from current challenges and thrive in the future.

3.5 Evaluation of the Role of Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development

The role of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development is pivotal, as their engagement and collaboration can significantly influence the direction and success of tourism initiatives. Ellis and Sheridan critically reflect on the role of stakeholders in the sustainable tourism development of least-developed countries (LDCs) (Ellis and Sheridan, 2014). They argue that external stakeholders often develop theoretical models and policies without adequately considering the practical implications and the local context. Their insights suggest that for sustainable tourism to be successful, policies must be grounded in the realities of the destinations where they are applied, and stakeholder roles must be critically evaluated to ensure their contributions are constructive and contextually relevant.

Sarkar and George examine the evolving role of social media in sustainable tourism development (Sarkar and George, 2018). They highlight how social media platforms can facilitate a shared commitment to sustainability among diverse tourism stakeholders. The study indicates that social media can be a powerful tool for promoting ecotourism and engaging stakeholders in a dialogue about sustainable practices. This perspective is particularly relevant for the U.S., where social media could be harnessed to foster greater stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism development.

A group of researchers assess the potential of cultural routes for sustainable tourism development, using Syria's Spiritual Route as a case study (Dayoub et al., 2020). They emphasize the importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders in the planning and development process to ensure that tourism initiatives are sustainable and beneficial for all parties involved. The study's findings are applicable to the U.S. context, where cultural routes can be developed as sustainable tourism attractions that engage local communities, government entities, and tourists in a collaborative effort.

These studies underscore the importance of stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism development. They advocate for a participatory approach that includes local communities, policymakers, industry professionals, and tourists. For the U.S., these insights offer guidance on how to effectively involve stakeholders in developing sustainable, culturally sensitive, and economically beneficial tourism policies and practices.

3.6 Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism Development

The journey toward sustainable tourism is marked by a landscape riddled with challenges that test the resilience and adaptability of the industry. These challenges, however, are not insurmountable barriers but rather gateways to innovative opportunities that can redefine the contours of tourism. Carr, Ruhanen, and Whitford shed light on the intricate balance required in Indigenous tourism, where the potential for economic empowerment is often shadowed by the risks of cultural commodification (Carr et al., 2016). The authors argue for a nuanced approach that safeguards cultural integrity while fostering economic benefits for Indigenous communities.

The fragility of tourism is further exposed by global crises such as pandemics, which disproportionately affect SMEs, the lifeblood of the tourism ecosystem. The resulting economic turbulence calls for a strategic reimagining of risk management and innovation pathways within these enterprises (Carr et al., 2016). On the flip side, the natural allure of destinations like Batu Kapal Beach presents a canvas for sustainable development, where community involvement and environmental stewardship can coalesce to create tourism models that are both profitable and protective of natural heritage (Wiweka et al., 2019).

The opportunities for sustainable tourism pivot on the axis of innovation and strategic planning. The SWOT analysis framework, as applied by Batu Kapal Beach, exemplifies a methodical approach to harnessing strengths and opportunities to counteract weaknesses and threats (Wiweka et al., 2019). This strategic foresight is pivotal for the sustainable evolution of tourism locales. Moreover, the collaborative synergy between government, industry, and community stakeholders can catalyze the development of inclusive tourism models that distribute benefits equitably and ensure that the voices of local communities are not just heard but heeded.

In conclusion, the path to sustainable tourism development is strewn with both challenges and opportunities. By confronting the former with innovative solutions and embracing the latter with strategic intent, the tourism industry can chart a course toward a future where sustainability is not just an aspiration but a realized practice.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of Findings in Relation to U.S. Tourism Policy

The interpretation of findings from sustainable tourism research in the context of U.S. tourism policy requires a nuanced understanding of the interplay between policy implementation and scientific recognition. Tanguay, Rajaonson, and Therrien delve into the complexities of sustainable tourism indicators (STIs), highlighting the challenges in reconciling the academic rigor with the practicality required by policymakers (Tanguay et al., 2013). Their study underscores the necessity of developing core STIs that are both scientifically credible and operationally viable within a destination's policy framework. This approach is particularly pertinent to the U.S., where tourism policy can benefit from evidence-based indicators that reflect the multifaceted nature of sustainability in tourism.

Loulanski and Loulanski provide a comprehensive meta-study on the sustainable integration of cultural heritage and tourism, offering a synthesized set of factors critical for sustainability (Loulanski and Loulanski, 2011). These factors include local involvement, sustainability-centered management, and integrated planning, which are essential for U.S. tourism policy to incorporate. The study's emphasis on stakeholder participation and governance aligns with the current trend towards more inclusive and collaborative tourism policy-making in the U.S., where the integration of cultural heritage can enhance the sustainability and appeal of tourism destinations.

A group of researchers evaluate the Tourism-Induced Environmental Kuznets Curve (T-EKC) hypothesis in the context of G7 countries, including the U.S. (Işık et al., 2020). Their findings suggest that while tourism can lead to increased CO₂ emissions, the incorporation of renewable energy consumption within the tourism sector can mitigate these effects. This insight is crucial for U.S. tourism policy, as it indicates the potential for environmental sustainability through the adoption of renewable energy and the re-evaluation of tourism policies to support sustainable practices.

In light of these studies, a balanced approach that integrates scientific insights with practical applications can inform U.S. tourism policy. The development of STIs that are tailored to the U.S. context, the incorporation of cultural heritage into tourism in a sustainable manner, and the emphasis on renewable energy within the tourism sector are all strategies that can enhance the sustainability of U.S. tourism. These policies can lead to a more resilient tourism industry that is capable of contributing to economic growth while preserving the environment and enhancing the social fabric of tourist destinations.

4.2 Challenges in Translating Developing Countries' Practices to the U.S. Tourism Policy

Translating sustainable tourism practices from developing countries to the U.S. context presents a complex set of challenges, particularly when considering the differences in environmental policies, stakeholder engagement, and governance structures. McDowell et al. critically review policies aimed at reducing phosphorus-induced water quality

impairment, drawing from experiences in New Zealand, the UK, and the U.S. The study highlights the difficulty of implementing practices when there is a poor understanding of local catchment processes and the critical source areas of pollution. This insight is crucial for U.S. tourism policy, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to environmental management in tourism is ineffective. Instead, policies must be tailored to U.S. destinations' specific environmental conditions and governance frameworks (McDowell et al., 2016).

A group of researchers evaluate the extent of policy integration between tourism and climate change, revealing that despite the significant impact of tourism on climate change, there is a lack of priority given to this nexus in policymaking (Becken et al., 2020). For the U.S., this indicates a gap in tourism policy that needs to be addressed, particularly in integrating climate change considerations into the broader tourism strategy. The study underscores the need for U.S. tourism policies to incorporate comprehensive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, learning from the successes and failures of other countries in this domain (Becken et al., 2020).

Elnasr Sobaih and Jones explore the disconnect between university research and industry practices in the context of Egypt's hospitality and tourism sector (Sobaih and Jones, 2015). The findings suggest that without government intervention to foster university-industry collaboration, the research produced may not translate into practical applications for the industry. This has implications for U.S. tourism policy, where fostering partnerships between academia and industry can lead to more innovative and evidence-based practices being adopted within the tourism sector. It also points to the need for U.S. policy-makers to create mechanisms that encourage such collaborations to bridge the gap between research and practice (Sobaih and Jones, 2015).

In synthesizing these studies, it becomes evident that the U.S. faces unique challenges in adopting sustainable tourism practices from developing countries. These challenges include adapting environmental policies to local contexts, integrating climate change into tourism policy, and fostering effective university-industry collaborations. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that considers the specificities of the U.S. tourism industry and its governance structures. By doing so, U.S. tourism policy can evolve to incorporate sustainable practices that are both environmentally sound and economically viable.

4.3 Policy Recommendations for Enhancing U.S. Tourism Sustainability

In the quest for sustainable tourism, the U.S. can draw from global insights and tailor them to its unique context. Raihan and Tuspekova provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamic impacts of various sectors on carbon emissions in Turkey, offering policy recommendations that could be adapted for the U.S. (Raihan and Tuspekova, 2022). They emphasize the importance of renewable energy use, sustainable urbanization, green industrialization, eco-friendly tourism, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable forest management. For the U.S., this suggests a multidimensional approach to tourism policy that integrates these elements to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability (Raihan and Tuspekova, 2022).

A group of researchers explore the nexus between tourism, economic growth, energy use, and carbon emissions in Singapore, proposing policies for sustainable development and a low-carbon economy (Raihan et al., 2022). They highlight the significance of reducing emissions through ecologically responsible tourism and the adoption of renewable energy technologies. The U.S. could implement similar strategies, focusing on the development of sustainable tourism practices that are economically viable and environmentally responsible (Raihan et al., 2022).

A group of researchers discuss the importance of equity in nutrition security through U.S. food policies and programs, which can be extrapolated to tourism sustainability (Thorndike et al., 2022). They advocate for policies that emphasize nutritional quality, improve reach, ensure optimal utilization, and improve coordination across programs. Translated into tourism, this would mean developing policies that ensure equitable access to sustainable tourism benefits, promote local food systems, and enhance the overall well-being of communities (Thorndike et al., 2022).

Scott and Gössling critically assess the effectiveness of declarations on tourism and climate change, questioning whether they have led to meaningful climate action (Scott and Gössling, 2021). They argue that the tourism sector's response to climate change must be as robust as its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. For the U.S., this implies that tourism policies should be ambitious and action-oriented, with clear targets and

accountability mechanisms to ensure that sustainability declarations translate into tangible outcomes (Scott and Gössling, 2021).

In summary, the U.S. can enhance its tourism sustainability by adopting a holistic policy framework that incorporates renewable energy, sustainable practices, and equitable benefits distribution. This framework should be supported by rigorous action plans and accountability systems to ensure that policy declarations lead to real-world impact. By doing so, the U.S. can position itself as a leader in sustainable tourism, setting a benchmark for others to follow.

4.4 Broader Implications for International Sustainable Tourism

The discourse on international sustainable tourism is increasingly recognizing the primacy of climate change as a critical factor that influences all aspects of tourism development and sustainability. Hall, Scott, and Gössling argue that the economic impacts of international tourism, while substantial, must be contextualized within a broader understanding of the environmental impacts, particularly emissions contributing to climate change (Hall et al., 2013). Their work suggests that the current growth paradigm in tourism is incompatible with the goals of sustainability, especially when considering the forecasted increase in emissions from tourism-related activities. This presents a significant challenge for the international tourism sector, which must reconcile the need for economic growth with the imperative of reducing its carbon footprint.

Sheller extends this argument by examining the intersection of tourism recovery, climate resilience, and sustainable tourism within the context of the Caribbean, a region highly dependent on tourism and vulnerable to climate-related disasters (Sheller, 2020). The study underscores the importance of mobility justice in the rebuilding of tourism infrastructures, suggesting that a just transition towards sustainable tourism requires not only infrastructural changes but also a rethinking of the ethical and political dimensions of tourism practices. This includes a critical assessment of 'disaster tourism' and the pursuit of alternative visions for tourism that prioritize community-based initiatives and regenerative economies.

The implications of these studies for international sustainable tourism are profound. They call for a reassessment of the role of tourism in sustainable development strategies, emphasizing the need for a significant shift in policy and practice. This shift must address the pro-growth paradigm that currently underpins much of the tourism industry, advocating instead for a model that prioritizes long-term environmental sustainability and social equity.

For the international tourism sector, this means engaging in a critical dialogue about the future of tourism in a climate-constrained world. It involves exploring new models of tourism that are less carbon-intensive, more resilient to climate impacts, and more inclusive of the needs and rights of local communities and ecosystems. It also means investing in technologies and practices that can help reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities, while also enhancing the experience and benefits for tourists and host communities alike.

The broader implications for international sustainable tourism are clear: the sector must evolve to meet the challenges posed by climate change and social inequities. This evolution requires a collaborative effort among governments, industry, communities, and tourists to redefine what sustainable tourism looks like in practice. It is only through such a collective reimagining and restructuring that international tourism can hope to contribute positively to the sustainable development goals and the health of our planet.

4.5 Envisioning the Future: Proactive Strategies for Sustainable Tourism

The sustainable tourism landscape is continuously evolving, shaped by global challenges and the innovative responses they provoke. As we look to the future, it is imperative to consider the role of technology and innovation in mitigating health risks, such as those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in fostering the recovery and sustainable development of the tourism sector (Li et al., 2022). The pandemic has underscored the vulnerability of tourism but also its capacity for transformation. Technology has emerged as a critical tool in this transformation, offering solutions to enhance safety, streamline operations, and improve the overall resilience of the tourism industry.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in tourism have been particularly impacted by recent global crises, prompting a reevaluation of their approach to innovation and resilience (Dias et al., 2022). The

pandemic has acted as a catalyst for these businesses to reassess their risk-taking strategies, working conditions, and the strength of their personal networks. The findings suggest that a robust network and a willingness to embrace risk are instrumental in enhancing the innovation and resilience of SMEs in the tourism sector (Dias et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of sustainable transformation is gaining traction, with a focus on integrating sustainability into all facets of tourism, including food consumption in restaurants (Fennell and Bowyer, 2020). This approach goes beyond traditional measures, advocating for a comprehensive framework that aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The Tourism and Sustainable Transformation Framework proposed by Fennell and Bowyer is a testament to the industry's potential to contribute meaningfully to global sustainability efforts (Bowyer, 2020).

In light of these insights, the future of sustainable tourism is likely to be characterized by a greater emphasis on technological innovation, a renewed focus on the resilience of tourism businesses, and a holistic approach to sustainability that permeates all levels of the industry. As we move forward, it will be crucial for stakeholders across the tourism spectrum to collaborate in fostering an environment that is conducive to sustainable growth and innovation.

5. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive review has meticulously navigated the multifaceted realm of sustainable tourism development, particularly within the context of developing countries, and has distilled critical implications for the United States. The study's aim to elucidate the significance, practices, and comparative lessons of sustainable tourism has been achieved through a systematic synthesis of global literature and practices.

Key findings from the study reveal that sustainable tourism is not a monolithic concept but a dynamic interplay of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic factors. The examination of practices in developing countries has underscored the importance of environmental sustainability, the richness of socio-cultural dimensions, and the tangible economic benefits that sustainable tourism can yield. These insights have provided a fertile ground for drawing lessons for the U.S., highlighting the potential for cross-pollination of ideas and strategies.

The study has identified best practices and policy innovations that have been successful in various developing nations. These practices offer a blueprint for the U.S. to enhance its tourism sustainability. The role of stakeholders has been evaluated, emphasizing the need for collaborative and inclusive approaches to sustainable tourism development.

In conclusion, the study recommends a proactive and integrated approach for the U.S. to adopt sustainable tourism practices. It calls for the adoption of innovative technologies, the empowerment of local communities, and the strategic alignment of tourism policies with global sustainability goals. The findings advocate for a tourism policy that is resilient, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving global landscape.

This review serves as a clarion call for the U.S. to not only draw lessons from the global south but to also forge a path that sets a new benchmark for sustainable tourism. It is an invitation for policymakers, industry leaders, and communities to unite in crafting a tourism future that is sustainable, equitable, and prosperous for generations to come.

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