



Review Article

## Sustainable Tourism Governance: A Way to Achieve Tourism Development by Preserving the Environment and Increasing Local Participation

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**Abstract:** The rapid growth of the tourism sector has significantly contributed to global economic development. However, it has also generated environmental, social, and cultural challenges that necessitate more sustainable approaches. This study aims to examine the role of governance in achieving sustainable tourism development while preserving the environment and enhancing local community participation. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study analyzes key concepts, types of sustainable tourism, and governance mechanisms that support their implementation, drawing on an extensive literature review and selected case studies in Indonesia. The findings reveal that sustainable tourism integrates economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity through various forms, such as ecotourism, green tourism, and community-based tourism. Effective governance, characterized by multi-stakeholder collaboration among government, the private sector, NGOs, and local communities, plays a crucial role in ensuring policy coherence, institutional coordination, and inclusive participation. Case studies from regions such as Sleman, Bandung, Malang, and East Lombok demonstrate that successful implementation depends on strategic planning, community empowerment, and partnership-based development models. The study concludes that sustainable tourism governance is essential for balancing development objectives with long-term sustainability goals. Strengthening stakeholder awareness, improving data integration, enhancing human resource capacity, and fostering international collaboration are critical to improving governance effectiveness and ensuring that tourism development generates equitable and sustainable benefits for present and future generations.

**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism; Tourism governance; Community-based tourism; Stakeholder collaboration; Indonesia.



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### 1. Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as a dynamic and multifaceted sector that encompasses a broad range of activities related to travel and temporary stays outside one's place of residence, whether for leisure, business, or other purposes (Coghlan, 2019). As an industry, tourism is inherently integrative and cross-sectoral, involving transportation, hospitality, cultural services, trade, and infrastructure development. This interconnected nature positions tourism as a key driver of

economic activity and service delivery across multiple sectors (Saravanan & Rao, 2012). Over the past decades, the global expansion of mobility, rising incomes, and increasing accessibility of destinations have significantly boosted tourism demand, making it one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide. Beyond its economic significance, tourism plays a crucial role in socio-cultural and political development. It contributes to job creation, stimulates entrepreneurship, and fosters regional development by opening new economic opportunities, particularly in developing countries. At the same time, tourism enhances intercultural understanding and global awareness, promoting respect for cultural diversity and local traditions (Yazdi, 2012). These multidimensional contributions highlight tourism as not merely an economic sector, but also a powerful instrument for social transformation and international cooperation.

In quantitative terms, the importance of tourism is substantial. The sector contributes approximately 9% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for nearly 29% of global service exports, making it a critical source of foreign exchange earnings, especially in developing economies. Some scholars even argue that tourism has the potential to surpass traditional sectors such as oil and gas as a primary contributor to national income in the future (Hubner et al., 2021). According to the World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals reached 1.5 billion in 2019, reflecting the massive scale and continued growth of the industry (Fadli et al., 2022). Furthermore, tourism is estimated to contribute over 10% of global GDP, generating trillions of dollars in economic activity and supporting hundreds of millions of jobs worldwide. In Indonesia, for instance, tourism has become a vital sector, contributing significantly to national income, with foreign exchange earnings reaching IDR 280 trillion in 2019 (Damiasih, 2023).

Despite these substantial benefits, the rapid growth of tourism has also generated a range of environmental, social, and cultural challenges. Uncontrolled tourism development has been associated with environmental degradation, resource depletion, cultural commodification, and social inequality. These challenges have raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of tourism and have prompted scholars and policymakers to seek more balanced and responsible approaches to tourism development. As a response, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged, aligning closely with the broader agenda of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism emphasizes the need to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and social inclusion, ensuring that tourism activities generate benefits without compromising the well-being of future generations. It is defined as tourism that fully considers its current and future impacts on the economy, society, and environment while addressing the needs of tourists, industry players, and host communities (World Tourism Organization, 2013). In this context, sustainable tourism is not only about minimizing negative impacts but also about maximizing positive contributions, such as enhancing local livelihoods, preserving cultural heritage, and protecting natural ecosystems (Sitepu et al., 2021).

Recognizing its strategic importance, governments around the world have increasingly incorporated sustainable tourism into their national development agendas. Sustainable tourism development is now viewed as a key instrument for achieving broader development goals, including poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and inclusive economic growth (Juganaru et al., 2008). However, the successful implementation of sustainable tourism requires more than policy formulation; it demands effective governance mechanisms that can coordinate diverse stakeholders and ensure the alignment of interests. In this regard, governance becomes a critical element in translating sustainability principles into practice. Sustainable tourism governance involves the coordination of multiple actors, including government agencies, private sector entities, local communities, and non-governmental organizations within a structured framework of policies, institutions, and collaborative processes. Effective governance ensures that tourism development is inclusive, participatory, and accountable, while also addressing complex challenges such as resource management, stakeholder conflicts, and policy integration.

Thus, the current study aims to examine the role of governance in achieving sustainable tourism development. It explores how governance structures, stakeholder collaboration, and policy frameworks contribute to the sustainability of tourism practices. In addition, this study presents empirical insights through selected case studies, particularly from Indonesia, to illustrate how sustainable tourism governance is implemented in practice. Before addressing these issues, it is essential to first understand the conceptual foundations and various typologies of sustainable tourism as a basis for further analysis.

## 2. Literature Review

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a response to the negative environmental, social, and cultural impacts of mass tourism. It is broadly defined as tourism that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Tourism Organization, 2013). This concept integrates three main pillars: economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity (Yazdi, 2012). According to Coghlan (2019), sustainable tourism emphasizes minimizing negative impacts while maximizing benefits for local communities and preserving natural and cultural resources. Similarly, Amerta et al. (2018) argue that sustainable tourism development requires a balanced approach that ensures long-term economic growth while maintaining ecological integrity and cultural authenticity. The growing importance of sustainable tourism is also supported by the World Bank (2017), which highlights its role in economic growth, poverty reduction, and environmental conservation.

## 2.1. Types and Approaches to Sustainable Tourism

The literature identifies various forms of sustainable tourism, each addressing specific aspects of sustainability. Ecotourism, for instance, focuses on environmental conservation and education, promoting responsible travel to natural areas (Drumm & Moore, 2005; Mckinney, 2017). Green tourism emphasizes environmentally friendly practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and conservation (Furqan & Som, 2010; Hasan, 2014; Andari & Setiyorini, 2016). Soft tourism represents an alternative to mass tourism by prioritizing low-impact activities and cultural preservation (Bacsi & Toth, 2019; Syrbe et al., 2022). Rural tourism, on the other hand, is considered a strategy for rural development and poverty alleviation, offering economic opportunities while preserving local traditions (Dashper, 2014; Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2016; Okech et al., 2012). Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has gained attention as a participatory model that empowers local communities as key stakeholders in tourism development (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). In addition, equitable tourism and Social and Solidarity Economy Tourism (SSET) emphasize fairness, inclusivity, and social justice in tourism practices (Saravanan & Rao, 2012; Caire, 2023). These diverse approaches collectively aim to create a more inclusive and sustainable tourism system (Juganaru et al., 2008).

## 2.2. Governance in Sustainable Tourism

Governance plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of sustainable tourism. It involves coordination among multiple stakeholders, including governments, private sectors, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (Nunkoo, 2017). Effective tourism governance requires transparent policies, institutional frameworks, and stakeholder collaboration to achieve sustainability goals (dos Anjos & Kennell, 2019). The World Tourism Organization (2013) emphasizes that sustainable tourism governance should be built upon three pillars: policy integration, regulatory frameworks, and institutional coordination. Fathani et al. (2023) further highlight that post-pandemic tourism governance requires adaptive and collaborative models to address emerging challenges. Collaborative governance is particularly important in developing countries, where resource limitations and institutional fragmentation can hinder effective policy implementation (Ringa et al., 2023). In this context, stakeholder engagement and trust-building are essential to ensure long-term sustainability.

## 2.3. Sustainable Tourism Development in Indonesia

Indonesia has increasingly adopted sustainable tourism as a national development strategy. Fadli et al. (2022) highlight that tourism plays a significant role in economic development while offering opportunities for sustainable growth. Government policies, such as sustainable tourism guidelines and regulatory frameworks, have been introduced to support this transition (Damiasih, 2023). At the local level, various case studies demonstrate the implementation of sustainable tourism governance. For instance, community empowerment and tourism village development have been successfully implemented in regions such as Sleman and Langkat (Prayudi & Susilo, 2022; Sitepu et al., 2021). Similarly, collaborative partnerships between local governments and stakeholders have been observed in East Lombok (Hendrayani & Darmastuti, 2019). Innovative models such as thematic tourism villages and community-driven initiatives, as seen in Malang, further illustrate the importance of governance networks in sustainable tourism development (Prasetyanti & Nugroho, 2019). Additionally, Hubner et al. (2021) emphasize four key pillars for Indonesia's sustainable tourism destinations: destination management, economic benefits, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

## 2.4. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its potential, sustainable tourism faces several challenges, including limited stakeholder awareness, inadequate data systems, and weak institutional capacity (Damiasih, 2023). Furthermore, achieving a balance between economic growth and environmental protection remains a persistent issue. Future research and policy efforts should focus on strengthening governance frameworks, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, and integrating sustainability principles into tourism planning and management (dos Anjos & Kennell, 2019; Fathani et al., 2023). International cooperation and knowledge exchange are also critical for promoting best practices and innovation in sustainable tourism development. Thus, the literature highlights that sustainable tourism is a multidimensional concept that requires integrated approaches encompassing environmental conservation, economic development, and social inclusion. Effective governance and stakeholder collaboration are essential to achieving sustainable tourism outcomes. While significant progress has been made, particularly in countries like Indonesia, ongoing efforts are needed to address existing challenges and ensure long-term sustainability.

## 3. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design, grounded in a systematic literature review, to examine sustainable tourism governance. Data were collected from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles,

books, policy documents, and reports from institutions such as the World Tourism Organization and the World Bank. Sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and contribution to the topic. The analysis uses qualitative content analysis to identify key themes related to sustainability principles, governance frameworks, and stakeholder roles. In addition, selected case studies from Indonesia (e.g., Sleman, Bandung, Malang, and East Lombok) are used to illustrate practical implementation. The study is guided by a framework integrating economic, environmental, and social dimensions with collaborative governance principles. However, reliance on secondary data and a country-specific focus may limit generalizability.

#### 4. Results

The findings of this study reveal that sustainable tourism governance is conceptualized as an integrated and dynamic framework that combines sustainability principles with collaborative governance mechanisms to ensure balanced tourism development. Across the reviewed literature and case studies, sustainable tourism is consistently understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing economic viability, environmental protection, and social inclusiveness. The results indicate that governance plays a central role in aligning these dimensions by facilitating stakeholder coordination, establishing regulatory frameworks, and ensuring that tourism development does not compromise ecological integrity or community well-being. In this context, sustainable tourism governance is not merely a policy objective but a continuous process that requires adaptive planning, institutional support, and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, the study identifies a range of sustainable tourism typologies that contribute to achieving sustainability objectives in different contexts (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Typologies of Sustainable Tourism and Key Characteristics

Type of Tourism	Core Focus	Key Characteristics	Main Contribution to Sustainability
Ecotourism	Environmental conservation	Nature-based activities, conservation awareness, low-impact travel	Protects ecosystems and biodiversity
Green Tourism	Environmental responsibility	Energy efficiency, waste reduction, and eco-friendly practices	Reduces environmental footprint
Soft Tourism	Low-impact development	Small-scale, culturally sensitive, low-density tourism	Preserves local culture and environment
Rural Tourism	Rural development	Village-based activities, local products, and traditional lifestyles	Reduces poverty and supports rural economies
Community-Based Tourism (CBT)	Local participation	Community ownership, local decision-making, cultural engagement	Empowers communities and ensures equitable benefits
Equitable Tourism	Fair distribution	Transparent pricing, fair wages, inclusive participation	Promotes social justice and fairness
SSET (Social & Solidarity Economy Tourism)	Social inclusion	Accessible tourism, solidarity-based activities	Enhances inclusivity and social welfare

These include ecotourism, green tourism, soft tourism, rural tourism, community-based tourism (CBT), equitable tourism, and social and solidarity economy tourism (SSET). The findings suggest that these approaches are often implemented in combination rather than in isolation, reflecting the complexity of tourism systems. Among these, community-based tourism stands out as a particularly significant model for its emphasis on local participation, empowerment, and equitable distribution of benefits. It demonstrates how tourism can serve as a tool for community development while preserving cultural and environmental resources. Similarly, rural tourism plays a critical role in revitalizing rural economies, reducing poverty, and preventing urban migration, while green and ecotourism contribute to environmental conservation and awareness. In terms of governance mechanisms, the results highlight that effective sustainable tourism governance is characterized by strong collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Key Elements of Sustainable Tourism Governance

Governance Component	Description	Key Actors Involved	Observed Outcomes (Indonesia Cases)
Policy & Regulatory Framework	Laws, policies, and tourism master plans guiding development	Government (national & local)	Structured and planned tourism development (e.g., Sleman, Bandung)
Institutional Coordination	Collaboration among agencies and sectors	Government, NGOs, private sector	Improved program implementation and resource management
Stakeholder Participation	Involvement of local communities and stakeholders	Local communities, tourism groups, private sector	Increased community empowerment (e.g., Pokdarwis, tourism villages)
Public-Private Partnerships	Joint initiatives for development and investment	Government & private sector	Infrastructure development and tourism promotion
Environmental & Cultural Management	Conservation and preservation efforts	Government, community, NGOs	Protection of natural and cultural resources
Capacity Building	Training and knowledge development	Government, institutions, local actors	Improved skills and awareness in tourism management
Monitoring & Evaluation	Data collection and performance assessment	Government agencies, researchers	Better policy adjustments, though still limited in some regions

The government is found to function primarily as a regulator and facilitator, responsible for policy formulation, planning, and oversight. The private sector contributes through investment, innovation, and operational expertise, while local communities serve as key actors in delivering services, preserving cultural heritage, and participating in decision-making. The findings further emphasize the importance of institutional arrangements and policy frameworks that enable coordination and accountability, as well as participatory mechanisms that ensure inclusiveness and transparency in governance processes. Empirical evidence from Indonesia provides concrete illustrations of how sustainable tourism governance is implemented at the local level. The results show that regions such as Sleman, Bandung, Malang, and East Lombok have adopted strategic planning approaches through tourism master plans and development programs aligned with sustainability principles. These initiatives include community empowerment programs, such as tourism awareness groups, that enhance local participation and capacity-building. Public-private partnerships are also identified as key drivers of tourism development, supporting infrastructure provision, destination promotion, and service improvement.

Additionally, environmental and cultural conservation efforts are integrated into tourism strategies, ensuring that natural resources and local traditions are preserved while enhancing destination appeal. Innovative practices, such as thematic tourism villages and creative urban tourism initiatives, further demonstrate how governance can transform local areas into sustainable and competitive tourism destinations. Despite these positive developments, the study identifies several challenges that hinder the effectiveness of sustainable tourism governance. These include limited awareness and capacity among stakeholders, particularly at the local level, as well as fragmented data systems that complicate planning and evaluation processes. Institutional coordination remains a significant issue, especially in contexts where multiple agencies share overlapping responsibilities. Moreover, the findings highlight an ongoing tension between economic growth and environmental sustainability, as increased tourism activity can place pressure on natural resources if not properly managed. These challenges suggest that while governance frameworks are in place, their implementation requires stronger institutional capacity, better data integration, and more effective stakeholder collaboration.

Finally, the results reveal emerging trends that indicate a shift toward more inclusive and adaptive governance models in sustainable tourism. There is increasing recognition of the importance of participatory approaches, particularly those that empower local communities and integrate their knowledge into tourism planning. Additionally, sustainability principles are becoming more embedded in national and regional policies, reflecting a broader commitment to sustainable development goals. Opportunities for international cooperation and knowledge exchange are also expanding, allowing countries to learn from best practices and innovative solutions. The findings demonstrate that sustainable tourism governance is evolving as a comprehensive approach that integrates policy, participation, and practice, offering significant potential for achieving long-term, balanced tourism development.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that sustainable tourism governance is inherently multidimensional, requiring the integration of environmental, economic, and social objectives within a coherent institutional framework. This aligns with the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) perspective, which emphasizes the simultaneous pursuit of economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity in development processes. The results demonstrate that governance mechanisms serve as the connecting structure that operationalizes these dimensions into actionable policies and practices. From a theoretical standpoint, the study supports the argument that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved through isolated interventions but requires systemic coordination among stakeholders. This is consistent with governance theory, which conceptualizes governance as a network of interdependent actors engaged in collaborative decision-making (Nunkoo, 2017). The findings highlight that the effectiveness of sustainable tourism governance depends on the quality of interactions between government, private sector, and local communities, confirming that trust, resource-sharing, and institutional coherence are critical determinants of successful outcomes.

The prominence of community-based tourism (CBT) observed in the results further strengthens participatory development theory, which emphasizes local communities as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries. Previous studies (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009) argue that community involvement enhances both the legitimacy and sustainability of tourism initiatives. This study extends that argument by showing that CBT not only improves local economic benefits but also contributes to social inclusion and cultural preservation, thereby reinforcing the social pillar of sustainability. In addition, the findings on diverse tourism typologies, such as ecotourism, green tourism, and rural tourism, illustrate the applicability of the sustainable development paradigm across different contexts. These models reflect adaptive strategies that respond to specific environmental and socio-economic conditions, supporting the notion that sustainability is context-dependent and flexible rather than universal. This aligns with dos Anjos and Kennell (2019), who emphasize that governance frameworks must be adaptable to local conditions to ensure effectiveness.

The empirical evidence from Indonesia provides further insights into how governance structures translate theory into practice. The implementation of tourism master plans, stakeholder collaboration, and community empowerment initiatives reflect elements of the Penta Helix model, which integrates government, academia, industry, community, and media in development processes. This model demonstrates that innovation and sustainability in tourism are enhanced through cross-sectoral collaboration, a finding that is increasingly emphasized in contemporary governance literature (Fathani et al., 2023). However, the study also reveals persistent challenges, particularly in terms of institutional capacity, data integration, and stakeholder awareness. These findings highlight a gap between policy formulation and implementation, a common challenge in sustainable development. From a theoretical perspective, this gap can be explained by the limitations of governance systems in managing complex, multi-actor environments. It suggests that the success of sustainable tourism governance is not only dependent on the existence of policies but also on institutional effectiveness and human resource capabilities.

Moreover, the tension between economic growth and environmental conservation identified in the results reflects a broader debate within sustainable development theory. While tourism is a significant driver of economic growth, uncontrolled development can undermine environmental sustainability. This study confirms that governance plays a critical role in mediating this tension by establishing regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms that ensure balanced development. The findings also point to emerging trends, such as the increasing adoption of collaborative governance and the integration of sustainability into policy frameworks. These trends indicate a shift toward more inclusive and adaptive governance models, which are essential for addressing the complexities of modern tourism development. They also suggest that sustainable tourism governance is evolving from a regulatory approach to a more participatory and innovation-driven model.

## 6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that sustainable tourism governance is a critical framework for achieving balanced tourism development that integrates economic growth, environmental protection, and social inclusion. The findings confirm that tourism, while offering substantial contributions to national economies and community livelihoods, also poses significant risks if not managed responsibly. In this context, sustainable tourism emerges as a necessary approach to ensure that development benefits are maintained without compromising natural resources, cultural heritage, and the well-being of future generations. The study further shows that sustainable tourism is implemented through diverse but complementary approaches, including ecotourism, green tourism, rural tourism, and community-based tourism. Among these, community-based tourism plays a particularly important role by strengthening local participation, enhancing economic equity, and preserving cultural identity. These approaches collectively highlight that sustainability in tourism is not a single model but a flexible and context-dependent strategy that adapts to local conditions and development priorities.

A key contribution of this study is to emphasize the importance of governance as the foundation of sustainable tourism. Effective governance is characterized by clear policy frameworks, institutional coordination, and active

stakeholder participation involving government, private sector, communities, and supporting institutions. The findings indicate that collaborative governance models significantly enhance the effectiveness of tourism development by aligning interests, sharing resources, and fostering inclusive decision-making processes. Empirical insights from Indonesia illustrate that sustainable tourism governance can be successfully implemented through strategic planning, community empowerment, and public–private partnerships. Initiatives such as tourism master plans, tourism awareness groups, and environmentally oriented programs demonstrate how governance mechanisms can translate sustainability principles into practice. However, the study also identifies persistent challenges, including limited stakeholder capacity, fragmented data systems, and coordination issues across institutions, which may hinder effective implementation.

In conclusion, sustainable tourism governance is not only a policy objective but also a continuous, adaptive process that requires strong institutional capacity, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term commitment. To enhance its effectiveness, policymakers should prioritize capacity building, strengthen data and monitoring systems, and promote inclusive participation at all levels. Future research is encouraged to explore empirical and quantitative assessments of governance impacts, as well as comparative studies across regions, to further advance understanding and practice of sustainable tourism governance in different contexts.

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