Sustainable Tourism Development in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the present initiatives being undertaken in Nepal to promote sustainable tourism. The long-term positive impacts of tourism on the environment, society, and economy are to be optimized through management strategies that align with sustainable tourism development. Its main objective is to protect and enhance local communities to maintain the environment and cultural heritage. Tourism is a broad term that includes a variety of subjects, things, and aspects related to social, economic, and environmental activities (Perles & Ivars, 2018). Sustainability is a fashionable trend in creation and operation, even in the travel and tourism industry. Disagreement exists about the many interpretations of sustainability and its applicability to the travel industry. This raises the question of whether tourism can be included in the definition of sustainable development. Because of limited resources and rising environmental consciousness, this study emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourist development for the benefit of coming generations. This article presents sustainable tourism's concept, definition, and historical background. In addition, the author critically assesses Poland's sustainable tourism growth, highlighting the need for reform in the present system. Presenting the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic aspects influencing sustainable tourism is the next task following the goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a fashionable trend in creation and operation, even in the travel and tourism industry. Disagreement exists about the many interpretations of sustainability and its applicability to the travel industry. This raises the question of whether tourism can be included in the definition of sustainable development. Because of limited resources and rising environmental consciousness, this article emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourist development for the benefit of coming generations. This article presents sustainable tourism's concept, definition, and historical background. In addition, the author critically assesses Poland's sustainable tourism growth, highlighting the need for reform in the present system. Presenting the sociocultural, environmental, and economic aspects influencing sustainable tourism is the next task following the goals.

A monographic and descriptive approach was taken in the work. It is significant to highlight the abundance of English and American literary works available about the topic. Western travel guides often define, discuss, and use "sustainable tourism"; sometimes, it even appears as a stand-alone book. However, the Nepali periodicals have little content (Aryal, 2019). The underdeveloped state of Nepal's tourist industry could result from the relatively new and underdeveloped field of tourism science. Another possible explanation could be the lack of interest in sustainability among managers of tourist facilities.

2. LEGISLATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Rules governing the use of the environment must be revised because of the rapid socioeconomic development brought about by utilizing natural resources like water, minerals, and space. The increasing degree of interference in the natural environment through exploitation, destruction, and pollution will result in a situation where socio-economic development is impossible without resources, given the irreversibility and limitations of many elements of the environment. The two reports, "Man and His Environment" by U'Thant and "The Limits to Growth" by D.L. Meadows, released in the late 1960s, have been crucial in raising awareness of environmental degradation and the depletion of its resources. These served as the cornerstone for worldwide discussions (Jely, 2021).

The inaugural United Nations (UNEP) Conference on the Human Environment, presided over by the UN Secretary-General, was held in Stockholm at the beginning of the 1970s. Based on three primary sources, it created an environmental action plan: 1. Earth Watch's global environmental assessment program; 2. Environmental management activities; and 3. International measurements support national and international assessment and management actions (Cooper et al., 2008). The Stockholm conference commissioned the World Conservation Strategy, an implementation tool for the human environmental action plan.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), whose chairman, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was a former prime minister of Norway whose name was taken from her, provided the Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" in 1987. This report marked a significant turning point in the path towards sustainability. Helping define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, as well as a long-term agenda for action during the coming decades and aspirational goals of the world community, was one of the commission's main objectives (Cooper et al., 2008).

According to the text, sustainable development " meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Though many of the Brundtland Report's recommendations never came to pass, they nonetheless gave the discussion a helpful starting point.

The UN quickly organized a significant international meeting on the subject because of the influence of this document. The 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, also known as the Environment and Development Conference, occurred five years after the Brundtland Report. The conference established Agenda 21, a comprehensive action plan, as a historic step toward sustainability. Despite not being mentioned in the Agenda or the Brundtland Report, tourism was not excluded, but their proposals had a significant impact on the planning and growth of the industry (Holloway, 2009).

The Rio Declaration, which comprises 27 principles outlining nations' rights and responsibilities regarding sustainable development, is another outcome of the conference that contains the fundamental ideas upon which state policies regarding socioeconomic development should be based while considering environmental conditions. For sustainability, 1992 was a pivotal year. The hospitality sector established the International Hotel Environment Initiative (IHEI) to lessen the environmental impact of

overnight guests. In addition, the UK-based advocacy group Tourism Concern released its own set of rules that same year. It started aggressively pressuring the business community to give sustainable planning more consideration. Guidelines for tourism concerns include: 1. Sustainable resource use; 2. Cutting back on waste and overconsumption; 3. Preserving diversity; 4. Including tourism in planning; 5. Fostering local economies; 6. Engaging local economies; 7. Conducting stakeholder and public consultations; 8. Providing staff training; 9. Ethically promoting tourism; 10. Doing research. It seems that these guidelines more successfully strike a balance between environmental and socio-cultural factors (Holloway, 2009).

It is crucial to note that the Kyoto Protocol, established in 1997, sought to mitigate the greenhouse impact by putting a cap on CO_2 emissions. Tourism takes the front stage in these considerations because leisure travel is not a necessity and because it increases CO_2 emissions through fossil fuels for transit, lodging, and at-destination transportation. Travel accounts for around 75% of the CO_2 emissions from tourism, with aircraft accounting for about 40%. Increasing transportation energy efficiency is anticipated to result in a 32% decrease in emissions per passenger kilometres between 2005 and 2035. However, the number of emissions varies according to the mode of transportation used; long-haul travel accounts for the majority of journeys that produce high emissions levels (Page, 2011).

Beginning in the early 21st century, both the public sector—which oversees strategy and planning—and the private sector—that is, travel and tourism businesses—have grown increasingly interested in sustainable tourism. Tour companies were targeted by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) when it unveiled its Initiative for Sustainable Tourism. The UN announcement that 2002 will be recognized as the International Year of Ecotourism came next. A World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Rio+10") was later convened in Johannesburg. This initiative emphasized the significance of sustainable development in tourism for the first time. Additionally, that same year, Quebec hosted a global summit on ecotourism.

The principles of sustainable development—which seek to reduce the harm that tourists and the tourism industry cause to the environment, wildlife, and local populations—were influenced by other industry organizations such as the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). They urge businesses to take the initiative to protect the environment where they do business in coordination with the Earth Council. Governments' genuine desire to carry out the worldwide plans and initiatives outlined more than ten years ago will become evident in the future.

3. CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Defining the word "sustainable development" is a prerequisite to delving into the goals and tenets of sustainable development in the tourism industry. Although sustainable development has gained traction, disagreement over what it means exists. It can be applied to numerous contexts, including tourism, and has varying meanings for different people. The Brundtland Report's definition, which states that "sustainable development meets the needs of the present generation without comprising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs," is the most inclusive yet correct.

The definition of sustainability outlines several fundamental concepts, including: - adopts a comprehensive approach to planning and strategy; - safeguards the environment (biodiversity) and human legacy; - maintains the fundamental ecological processes; - encourages and involves public participation; - guarantees the long-term sustainability of productivity; - offers greater equality and opportunities among nations. (Fyall, Cooper, Gilbert, Wanhill, and Fletcher, 2008). The notion of sustainable development is sometimes referred to as suspensory, eco-, or self-sustaining development. Economic development, environmental preservation, and social development are the three pillars that

support sustainable development. Recently, "socio-cultural development" has taken the place of the term "social development." this notion is predicated on the appropriate and deliberate shaping of the relationships between the pillars, which are meant to maintain social, environmental, and economic equilibrium within and across generations (Meyer & Milewski, 2009).

The word "sustainable" is used in the Polish Constitution and is currently present in most regional development plans. The term "sustainable tourism" refers to all tourist-related activities, management, and development that ensure the preservation of natural and cultural resources while preserving the integrity of the economy and society. Sustainable tourism development principles and management techniques can benefit all forms of tourism in various places, including mass tourism and specialist tourism segments.

Encouraging the best use of environmental resources, which are crucial to the growth of the tourism industry, preserving vital ecological processes, and contributing to preserving biodiversity and natural heritage are thus requirements for putting sustainable tourism concepts into practice. - Preserving the constructed and living cultural history and traditional values of the host communities, honouring their socio-cultural authenticity, and fostering tolerance and understanding amongst cultures.

Ensuring sustainable, long-term economic operations, offering equitable socioeconomic advantages to all stakeholders, such as steady employment and income-earning possibilities and social services to host communities, and helping to reduce poverty (UNEP, 2004).

Informed involvement from all pertinent parties is necessary for sustainable tourism development, and strong political leadership is needed to guarantee widespread engagement and consensus-building. Attaining sustainable tourism necessitates ongoing impact monitoring and the introduction of appropriate preventive and/or corrective actions as needed. Along with providing visitors with a meaningful experience, sustainable tourism should maintain high customer satisfaction, increase visitors' understanding of sustainability issues, and encourage sustainable travel behaviors.

Particularly significant elements of sustainable tourism are competitive and socially conscious tourism enterprises, the ability of all residents to engage in tourism, solid job prospects within the industry, and the positive effects of tourism on the neighbourhood. To achieve this, tourism programs must incorporate environmental conservation, cultural heritage resources, and the preservation of cultural integrity. Both regional governments and tourism-related businesses make great efforts to put sustainable tourism development into practice.

"Eco-tourism," as defined by The International Ecotourism Society, is a type of sustainable tourism involving ethical travel to natural regions that maintain the environment and uphold the welfare of the local population. It combines aspects of both cultural and rural tourism. Ecotourism adheres to specific principles in addition to sustainable tourism: it actively supports the preservation of natural and cultural heritage; it involves local communities in the planning, development, and operation of tourism activities, thereby contributing to their welfare; it provides visitors with comprehensive and engaging explanations about the natural and cultural resources; and it targets both individual tourists and small, organized groups.

Nature-based tourism frequently involves hiking, mountain climbing, seeing wildlife in its native habitat, and other outdoor activities. Furthermore, it may also include cultural events. Ecotourism is crucial to education because it provides a chance to acquire respect for the environment and the local way of life and for some to reflect on their own lives while being moved by the beauty of their surroundings. Gaining advantages for the community at large is another hallmark of ecotourism. According to Sambotin, Sambotin, Patrascoiu, Coroian, and Merce (2011), this entails employing

locals, obtaining local goods, including the community in decision-making, and planning tourism-related events.

Sustainable development guidelines for travel-related businesses

In tourism businesses, the application of sustainable development principles is somewhat uncommon. This is because the social expenses and costs associated with environmental protection are either not included in the economic calculation for tourism enterprises or are only partially included. The most popular solutions in practice are those that are low-cost (making booklets, labelling the location, etc.), aid in cost reduction (energy conservation in hotels, recycling), enable better brand positioning for businesses to set themselves apart from the competition, and elicit a favourable response from customers (Sharpley & Telfer, 2008 as quoted in Holden & David Fennell, 2012).

The primary obstacles to corporations implementing sustainable development concepts are primarily related to their lack of understanding of the issue, their desire to cut expenses, and their doubts about how their actions will benefit their clientele. Tourism organizers and shipowners seldom apply the principles of sustainable development, primarily because of the high degree of demand elasticity and variable costs. In contrast, transportation undertakings and hotel management frequently incorporate sustainable principles into their product design, owing to a more significant proportion of less price-sensitive business clients. businesses adopting these ideas are also impacted by their environment; in Northern Europe, organizations use sustainable development concepts more frequently than in the Mediterranean, and larger businesses frequently employ this approach (Meyer and Milewski, 2009, as quoted in Holden & David Fennell, 2012). Every area where human activity affects the environment is covered by Local Agenda 21, an extensive action plan to be implemented locally by organizations and local government. It functions as a manual for organizing regional development using sustainable development ideas. To determine the community's tourist goals and develop an action plan to reach them, local Agenda 21 processes strongly emphasize working together (Kazimierczak, 2005).

Aims of sustainable tourism

An increase in visitors who adhere to the concepts of sustainable development is the primary goal of developing a sustainable tourism plan for a particular area. This goal can be accomplished by several specific goals, including building a common brand for the region; creating a vision, mission, and framework marketing plan activities for the duration of the strategy; coordinating with all parties interested in the development of tourism in the area; inventorying local tourism products; taking local communities and the environment's interests into consideration when shaping the tourism product and marketing activities; and assessing how potential customers perceive marketing and products (Meyer, Milewski, 2009).

It is vital to divide the goals of sustainable tourism into three contexts: economic, environmental, and sociocultural sustainability.

1. Financial considerations of eco-friendly travel: a) Financial gain ensuring local prosperity; b) regional and business viability and competitiveness to achieve long-term viability Increasing the number and quality of tourism-related jobs in the local community, including wages, work environments, and employment opportunities without discrimination; d) Social equity; maximizing the economic benefits of tourism to the local community, including tourists' spending in the area; ensuring the equitable and fair sharing of tourism's economic and social benefits (Panasiuk, 2011).

2. Two facets of sustainable tourism that address the environment: a) Structural integrity preservation and enhancement of the landscape's quality in both rural and urban settings, as well as the avoidance of visual and ecological contamination; b) biological variety encouraging and safeguarding the environment, animals, and natural habitats while reducing the adverse effects of tourism on the ecosystem; c) Efficient waste management reducing the amount of non-renewable and rare resources used in the growth of tourism; d) a Clean environment that minimizes contamination of the water, air, and soil and reduces waste production by travelers and travel agencies (Panasiuk, 2011).
3. Three sociocultural facets of environmentally conscious travel include a) community welfare constructing the community's welfare, which includes social infrastructure, resource access, environmental quality, avoiding social corruption, and resource exploitation; b) Cultural wealth preserving and enhancing the unique characteristics of the host community, local customs, and cultural heritage; c) Fulfilling tourist expectations d) Local control Authority for planning and decision-making in the management of tourism by local communities (Panasiuk, 2011). Ensuring a safe and enjoyable tourist experience that will fulfil tourists' demands and be accessible to all.

Sustainable tourism development

Despite the popularity of "ecotourism" or "sustainable tourism," most of the practice is still theoretical. While there are a few notable instances of "eco-hotels," such as the renowned Inter-Continental Hotels Group (IHG) in Bora Bora or a Polish hotel in Bysłowiec, the tourist and hospitality industries in general are gradually shifting toward a more environmentally friendly sector.

Although many Polish hotel managers are familiar with sustainability and ecology, this knowledge has not yet been incorporated into marketing strategies. A few things could be the cause. Clients of Polish lodging services might not be aware of eco-hotels or might not be drawn to these lodging establishments. The second explanation is that eco-hotels could be done. In the Polish hotel market, the concept is slowly taking off. The Polish Hotel Association is preparing the inaugural "EKOHOTEL" eco-label. Additionally, many hotel managers submit applications for the ISO 14001 standard, a European management standard created by the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (Pasko, Staszewska-Ludwiczak, 2008).

We are happy to have all of those hotel-specific technology and incentives. However, the primary motivation for their introduction is financial. Managers do not often introduce other postulates with the same ease, like recycling garbage. Determining whether legislative restrictions will support or impede development towards sustainability is a challenging task in this context. Lodging is but one branch of the entire tourism industry. Transportation uses the most energy, so a lone customer or enterprise cannot accomplish much in this situation. Tourists do not influence the amount of fuel used by buses, trains, ships, and airplanes. Technological advancements are inextricably linked to travel and transportation. As stated, Poland's tourism industry is comparable to the rest of the globe regarding its economic and socio-cultural aspects.

Impacts of tourism

Since the tourism industry depends directly and indirectly on natural resources and their quality, sustainable development must be applied to the sector for it to function. Meanwhile, tourism has beneficial and detrimental consequences for the three facets of sustainability.

1. Financial impact

A nation or region's tourist industry is considered to have significant economic potential to combat poverty by creating jobs and revenue. However, the real economic gains can be far smaller than anticipated if tourism is not planned and operated responsibly, considering the needs and concerns of the local community. Tourism's three primary economic advantages are lower unemployment, improved infrastructure, and increased regional revenue, both monetary and non-monetary.

Increased tourism employment results in the higher purchasing power of workers and their families. Furthermore, economic advantages can occasionally be generated in a location distant from the vacation spot or tourist destination. For example, workers on cruise ships frequently transfer their earnings back to their native nations. Like any other industry, the tourism industry requires a robust infrastructure network. This includes social and cultural infrastructure such as dining establishments, bars, medical facilities, theatres, movie theatres, entertainment venues, highways, and train tracks.

Any money visitors spend at the location on meals, tours, souvenirs, tips, and other expenses is considered a direct benefit to the area. Tour operators' sums to regional vendors, such as lodging facilities and transportation providers, are also included. The money from selling goods and services to visitors is considered an indirect gain. For instance, the hotels' food may give local manufacturers or farmers jobs and income. These indirect effects can be increased by making the most of locally produced goods, reducing the number of visitors a place needs.

Revenue "leakages," or the production and acquisition of goods and services utilized in tourism outside of the nation or region, are the primary way local communities lose out on the benefits of tourism. Furthermore, government spending on tourist infrastructure—such as roads, airports, health centres, and sanitary facilities—may result in less money for the local population's fundamental needs. The cost of cleaning up the air and water pollution brought on by tourism, economic losses from pollution-related illnesses, and higher living expenses for locals and visitors are additional possible expenses. In addition, the cost of goods and services increases noticeably during peak season. When there are insufficient workers, a labor barrier arises.

2. Effects on the environment

The ecology can suffer from various detrimental effects from tourism, some of which are permanent. Tour operators and their clients have abandoned older destinations in favour of new, undamaged ones in some extreme examples when long-term environmental degradation has ruined the same attributes that once attracted tourists to a region (www.researchgate.net). Due to habitat conversion, damage to forests, coral reefs, coastal areas, and other ecosystems, and poorly managed tourism, there is a risk of biodiversity loss and landscape degradation (Sitek, 2007). According to Panasiuk (2011), places with high natural assets deemed particularly vulnerable to degradation include freshwater ecosystems, coastal areas, alpine areas, and the coasts of the Antarctic and Arctic.
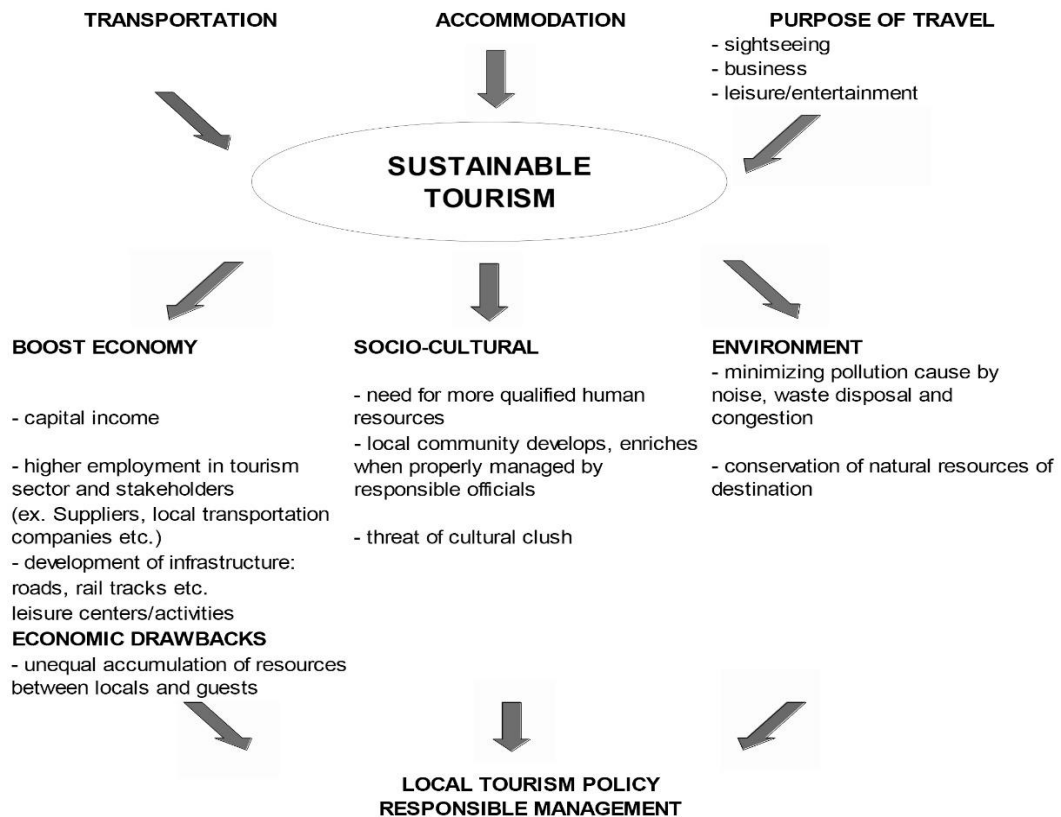
Tourism disrupts the water balance by producing waste from tourism businesses and travelers. Because airplanes and other types of transportation emit carbon dioxide, which contributes to climate change caused by human activity, travel to tourist sites influences the entire world. While tourism may negatively affect the environment, it can also have positive effects. The money from the tourism industry can substantially contribute to protecting protected areas like forests and coral reefs. Also, ecotourism can support the promotion of environmentally sustainable leisure. Standards for corporate social responsibility are being introduced to conserve energy and water, lessen waste production, and do other things (UNEP/WTO, 2005, Submitted to Global School of Technology & Management Pte Ltd). By

now, it should be apparent that, like all industries, tourism will always hurt the environment. Even if they cannot be completely eradicated, reducing the adverse consequences as much as possible should be a top focus.

3. Impact on society-culture

The local social environment is known to undergo negative alterations due to tourism development. The manner of life, social structures, and customs of the locals are frequently disrupted by foreign visitors. Regional authenticity disappears as local culture becomes commercialized. Social disputes and pathologies within the local community are on the rise. Tour operators can help prevent negative effects and promote beneficial cultural changes by promoting appropriate behavior among visitors and supporting local businesses. Reducing conflict and cultural disruption may be achieved by educating customers about appropriate behavior and limiting their opportunity to misbehave (UNEP, 2005).

The model below shows an illustration of how tourism and local policy interact while considering sociocultural, economic, and environmental factors. The tourist business and its effect on sustainability can be divided into three primary categories: traveler purpose, lodging services, and mode of transportation. While each of those three alone affects the final location, taken as a whole, the model presents a broader picture. The approach emphasizes how critical it is to manage visitor flow responsibly.

TRANSPORTATION   **ACCOMMODATION**   **PURPOSE OF TRAVEL**
- sightseeing
- business
- leisure/entertainment

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

BOOST ECONOMY

- capital income

- higher employment in tourism sector and stakeholders
(ex. Suppliers, local transportation companies etc.)
- development of infrastructure: roads, rail tracks etc.
leisure centers/activities

ECONOMIC DRAWBACKS
- unequal accumulation of resources between locals and guests

SOCIO-CULTURAL

- need for more qualified human resources
- local community develops, enriches when properly managed by responsible officials

- threat of cultural clush

ENVIRONMENT
- minimizing pollution cause by noise, waste disposal and congestion

- conservation of natural resources of destination

LOCAL TOURISM POLICY RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

Model for sustainable tourism

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The tourism sector is usually the first to adopt sustainable development methods when advantageous. Hospitality industry entrepreneurs primarily introduce eco-friendly solutions for financial reasons. This category includes individuals who provide lodging services. It could also be viewed favourably from a marketing standpoint. Eco-labels may draw customers and tourists to specific regions.

Local communities may suffer because tourists interfere with their customs and traditions. Nonetheless, there is an additional way tourism could aid in conserving cultural property. Historical landmarks are being conserved and renovated to attract tourists, even if they will stay in their original place for future generations.

Getting visitors to learn how to engage with local communities should be prioritized. Hosts should be given more thought and respect. Furthermore, lodging facility owners must consider the community's needs going forward in addition to the expectations of their current clientele. They must understand that without the cooperation of the local community and observance of environmental regulations, they will not be able to maintain their popularity as a travel destination.

5. CONCLUSION

Adopting sustainable practices is the best defense against tourism destinations' social, cultural, and environmental degradation. When properly handled, tourism may strengthen regional economies and add to the well-being of the local area. The tourism sector may be seen as an easy way to get financing because banks and investors are ready to give money to tour operators. By producing less trash and consuming less water and energy, sustainable practices can help reduce operating costs. However, human capital will also rise as more skilled workers are needed. Tourist companies with an eco-friendly reputation build their brands, hold their position in the market, and are less vulnerable to short-term changes in the market and economy. In this regard, putting sustainable development concepts into practice is expensive.

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