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## BEYOND GROWTH: RETHINKING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM THROUGH SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS

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**Relevance of the study.** *The study explores the complex relationship between urban tourism and sustainable development, emphasizing the balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental responsibility.*

**The subject of this research** *is the evolving governance models for sustainable tourism in urban environments, where overtourism, short-term rentals, and changes in resident-tourist dynamics pose new challenges for policymakers.*

**The objective of the study** *is to analyze theoretical approaches to sustainable tourism management, assess the social impacts of tourism expansion, and propose governance strategies that integrate tourism into broader urban planning frameworks while maintaining sustainability principles.*

**The methodology employed** *in this research includes a systematic review of scholarly literature on sustainable tourism, urban tourism development models, and destination management theories, with a focus on the Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model and Doxey's Irritation Index. The study also incorporates comparative analysis of case studies, particularly examining tourism policy shifts in European cities facing overtourism. Key qualitative indicators related to visitor management, carrying capacity, and governance frameworks are critically assessed.*

*The results indicate that while traditional tourism management approaches emphasize economic benefits, contemporary strategies must prioritize long-term social sustainability by integrating stakeholder participation, resident well-being, and cultural heritage preservation. The study identifies a paradigm shift from minimizing negative tourism impacts to actively maximizing positive contributions, such as infrastructure improvements, economic diversification, and cultural revitalization. Furthermore, governance models that emphasize participatory decision-making and adaptive management prove more effective in balancing tourism growth with local community interests.*

**The findings of this study** *can be applied in municipal governance, tourism policymaking, and strategic urban planning. Policymakers, city planners, and tourism industry stakeholders can utilize the proposed governance frameworks to create balanced, community-centered tourism policies that enhance urban sustainability. The insights from this research also contribute to academia by bridging gaps between tourism development theories and practical urban sustainability models.*

**In conclusion,** *the research underscores that sustainable urban tourism management requires a shift from conventional economic-driven models to holistic frameworks that integrate environmental conservation, social equity, and responsible governance. Future studies should further explore the role of digitalization, crisis resilience, and comparative policy analyses to enhance sustainable tourism strategies. A comprehensive, stakeholder-driven approach will be key to ensuring that tourism continues to contribute positively to urban development rather than becoming a source of socio-environmental degradation.*

**Key words:** Sustainable Tourism, Urban Planning, Social Sustainability, Tourism Management, Tourism Policy, Urbanization, Sustainable Development.

## ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ СТАЛОГО ТУРИЗМУ: СОЦІАЛЬНІ, ЕКОНОМІЧНІ Й ЕКОЛОГІЧНІ ВИМІРИ ЗА МЕЖАМИ ЗРОСТАННЯ

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**Актуальність дослідження:** автори висвітлюють складні взаємозв'язки між міським туризмом і сталим розвитком, акцентуючи увагу на балансі між економічним зростанням, соціальною справедливістю й екологічною відповідальністю. **Предмет дослідження:** еволюція моделей управління сталим розвитком туризму в міському середовищі, де перенасичення туристами, короткострокова оренда житла та зміни у взаємодії між місцевими жителями й відвідувачами створюють нові виклики для політиків. **Метою дослідження** є аналіз теоретичних підходів до управління сталим туризмом, оцінювання соціальних наслідків розширення туристичної діяльності й розроблення стратегій управління, що інтегрують туризм у ширший контекст міського планування, дотримуючись принципів сталості. **Методологія дослідження** включає систематичний аналіз наукової літератури щодо сталого розвитку туризму, моделей розвитку міського туризму й теорій управління дестинаціями, з особливим акцентом на моделі життєвого циклу туристичної території Р. Батлера й індекс роздратування Д. Доксі. Застосовано порівняльний аналіз кейсів, зокрема аналіз політичних змін у сфері туризму в європейських містах, які стикаються з проблемами надмірного туризму. Критично оцінено основні якісні показники, що стосуються управління відвідувачами, допустимого навантаження на туристичні дестинації та моделей управління. **Результати дослідження** свідчать, що традиційні підходи до управління туризмом зосереджуються переважно на економічних перевагах, тоді як сучасні стратегії мають орієнтуватися на довгострокову соціальну сталість, інтегруючи участь зацікавлених сторін, добробут місцевих жителів і збереження культурної спадщини. Дослідження виявляє зміщення парадигми від мінімізації негативних впливів туризму до активного максимізування його позитивного внеску, зокрема розвитку інфраструктури, економічної диверсифікації та культурного відродження. Крім того, моделі управління, які ґрунтуються на партисипативному прийнятті рішень та адаптивному менеджменті, є більш ефективними в збалансуванні туристичного зростання з інтересами місцевих громад. **Практичне значення:** отримані результати можуть бути застосовані в муніципальному управлінні, під час розроблення туристичної політики та стратегічного міського планування. Політикам, міським планувальникам і представникам туристичної галузі запропоновано моделі управління, що сприяють розробленню збалансованих, орієнтованих на громаду політик сталого туризму. **Висновки** дослідження також мають наукове значення, оскільки поєднують теоретичні підходи до розвитку туризму з практичними аспектами міської сталості. У підсумку дослідження підкреслює необхідність переходу від традиційних економічно орієнтованих моделей управління міським туризмом до комплексних підходів, що інтегрують екологічну відповідальність, соціальну справедливість та ефективне управління. **Перспектива подальших досліджень** має бути спрямована на вивчення ролі цифровізації, стійкості до кризових явищ і порівняльний аналіз політик для вдосконалення стратегій сталого туризму. Комплексний, оснований на участі зацікавлених сторін підхід стане ключовим чинником забезпечення позитивного внеску туризму в розвиток міст, уникаючи при цьому соціальних та екологічних загроз.

**Ключові слова:** сталий туризм, міське планування, соціальна сталість, управління туризмом, туристична політика, урбанізація, сталий розвиток.

**Statement of the problem.** Sustainable development in the tourism sector requires a compromise between economic activities of business communities, adherence to environmental standards, and consideration of the needs of local residents. The concept of “sustainability” necessitates the integration of economic, environmental, and social factors. However, fulfilling social requirements is not always feasible or desirable from an economic perspective for businesses.

The historical development of tourism in several European cities illustrates the emergence of negative externalities, including overcrowding, the touristification of local environments, infrastructural strain, and undesirable visitor behavior. As a result, a phenomenon frequently referred to in contemporary literature as “overtourism” has emerged. The term overtourism describes “...places where hosts or guests, local residents or visitors feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably”. While overtourism is often associated with mass tourism and large numbers of visitors, it should not be reduced to mere quantitative metrics. Social impact and the perception of overtourism are also shaped by various interrelated factors such as time, concentration, local etiquette, visitor characteristics, prior tourism experiences, and geographical location. In this regard, the definition of overtourism carries an evident aspect of subjectivity. Even if tourism could be perfectly controlled, forecasted, and measured, the question remains as to what type and extent of tourism (impact) qualifies as excessive. Similarly, who determines when the authenticity of a destination is lost? The answers to these questions depend on subjective interpretations based on specific sets of values and norms, posing a challenge for defining the term with precision.

**Review of recent research and publications addressing the problem and identification of unresolved aspects.** The Ukrainian society, influenced by Russian aggression, is undergoing a state of transformation, experiencing significant changes as it eradicates imposed ideologies cultivated over decades and seeks its own path

of development. This trajectory is characterized by the distinct features of a well-defined national identity. However, the concepts of sustainable societal development, the preservation of natural resources, and the conscientious protection of the cultural heritage of each region remain insufficiently articulated. Therefore, the effective management of the sustainable development of the tourism industry is essential in addressing this gap.

The theoretical and methodological foundations for managing the sustainable development of the tourism industry have been shaped by the works of renowned social scientists and experts, including: V.K. Babarytska, D.I. Basiuk, O.O. Beidyk, V.I. Byrkovych, O.Yu. Bobrovska, N.V. Bondarchuk, M.V. Bosovska, V.K. Kiptenko, N.S. Klunko, A.O. Levytskyi, S.V. Levto, O.O. Lyubitseva, S.V. Maistro, M.P. Malska, I.H. Smyrnov, D.M. Stechenko, as well as prominent international scholars such as A. Ali, W. Althof, G. Ashworth, S.J. Page, S. Baker, D. Beck, G.H. Brundtland, D. Burtenshaw, R. Butler, J-P. Ceron, G. Dubois, C. Cooper, J. Fletcher, D. Gilbert, G.V. Doxey, L. Dwyer, C. Kim, D. Fodness, S. Formica, N. Frederico, A. Hardy, S. McCool, G. Stankey, P. Mason, A. Mathieson, G. Wall, D. Lime, T. Mihalic, T. Panayotou, J. Rittel, M. Webber, R. Sharpley, C. Southgate, I. Sindiga, E. Sirakaya, and D. Telfer.

Despite the extensive body of fundamental domestic and international research on this subject, the problem of managing the sustainable development of the tourism industry remains unresolved.

**Formulation of the Article’s Objectives.** The objective of this article is to explore the theoretical and methodological foundations for managing the sustainable development of the tourism industry within the framework of public administration, emphasizing the interplay between economic growth, environmental responsibility, and social equity. By critically assessing existing tourism management models, this study seeks to highlight the limitations of traditional approaches that prioritize economic expansion without adequately considering the social and environmental

dimensions of sustainability. Given the increasing impact of urbanization on tourism development, the research aims to identify strategies that integrate tourism into broader urban planning frameworks, ensuring that tourism serves as a driver of inclusive and sustainable urban growth rather than a source of socio-environmental strain. Furthermore, this article seeks to contribute to the discourse on social sustainability in tourism by examining the role of local communities in shaping tourism policies, addressing concerns related to overtourism, cultural heritage preservation, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits. By drawing on international best practices and empirical research, the study aims to propose a governance model that fosters stakeholder collaboration, enhances resilience in tourism-dependent economies, and maximizes the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. Through this analysis, the article endeavors to provide policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders with a comprehensive framework for sustainable tourism management that balances economic viability with environmental and social imperatives.

**Presentation of the Main Research Findings with Full Justification of the Scientific Results.** Western urban planners emphasize the difficulty of establishing universal indicators for overtourism or operationalizing the term. They highlight that the perception of overtourism is highly contextual and relative, largely dependent on the perspectives of local residents. Therefore, tourism-related events that elicit dissatisfaction and perceptions of declining conditions in a given location are numerous and complex.

One frequently discussed phenomenon is the rise of short-term apartment rentals for visitors, with Airbnb currently serving as a dominant commercial player in this sector. Researchers investigating the impact of Airbnb argue that, although Airbnb has the potential to stimulate local economic growth when properly regulated, its exponential growth in many cities has disrupted local real estate markets [1, p. 11]. Changes associated with the expansion of short-term rental markets include inflated property

prices and the gentrification of certain neighborhoods. External consequences of short-term rental growth include an increased cost of living for local residents, who, in turn, may be forced to relocate. When tourism-related consequences and developments are perceived as undesirable, a shift occurs in residents' attitudes toward tourism and its development.

For instance, an empirical study on visitor-resident relations in a European city such as Barcelona illustrates how attitudes toward tourism development changed significantly within just three years. Between 2016 and 2019, local residents' satisfaction with tourism activities declined from 69.8% to 47.5%. Ultimately, dissatisfaction with the trajectory of tourism development was so pronounced that an alternative approach to tourism growth became a central theme in the political campaign of Ada Colau, who was elected mayor of Barcelona in 2015 [2, p. 8]. While the predominant use of the term "overtourism" to describe negative social impacts is relatively new, observations and theories concerning the adverse social effects of tourism development are not.

A prominent scholar in this field, Richard Butler, was among the first advocates for understanding the social impacts of tourism. According to Butler, these impacts must be adequately measured and identified to enable governments to develop planning policies and strategies aimed at controlling the undesirable social consequences of tourism development.

Another early researcher who made a significant contribution to understanding how tourism affects destinations was George Doxey. Doxey developed a fundamental framework for visitor-resident relations that continues to be widely referenced by scholars. His model, known as the "Irridex" (Irritation Index), classifies stages of tourism development based on local residents' attitudes toward visitors. According to Doxey's model, the initial stages of tourism development are often characterized by an "euphoric" sentiment, where tourism is perceived as a positive contributor to the destination [3, p. 196].

As the tourism industry expands and visitor numbers grow, negative side effects on the eco-

nomic, cultural, and social elements of a destination can cause this “euphoria” to transition into “apathy”, “irritation”, and, in extreme cases, “antagonism” (Table 1). The four stages of development are associated with corresponding planning responses from local authorities.

Another major contribution influencing tourism research is Butler’s theory of tourism life cycles (Figure 1).

Butler’s model follows a basic asymptotic curve, modeling the stages of tourism industry development in a region that gradually becomes a tourist destination. In the early stages, a small, irregular number of visitors arrive, drawn by unique cultural or natural features. During this stage, interactions with local residents are a key attraction due to the low concentration of tourists. The economic and social impact of tourism at this stage is minimal. As visitor awareness

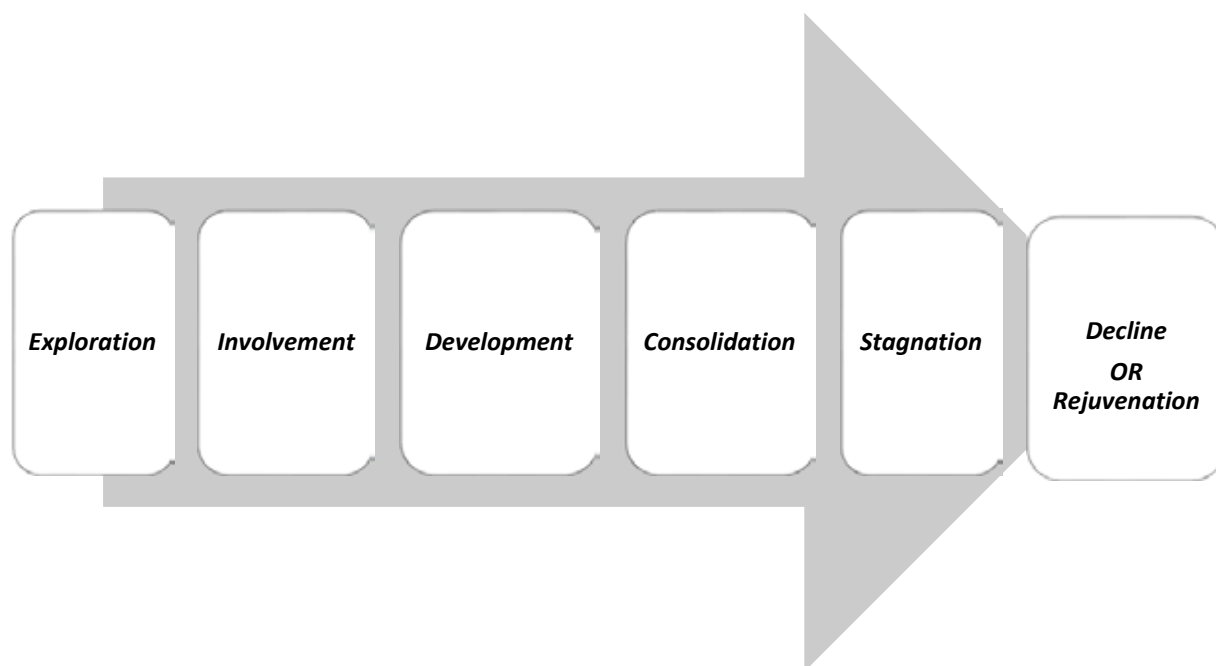
and infrastructure improve, tourism numbers increase, leading to initial marketing efforts. As stable visitor patterns emerge, tourism seasons develop, and infrastructure demands grow [4, p. 5–11].

As a destination approaches its carrying capacity, it enters the “consolidation” stage. At this point, further growth may be restricted by physical or social factors, such as overcrowding or increasing dissatisfaction among residents. Growth rates slow, and a “stagnation” stage follows, potentially leading to a decline in tourism numbers if the destination loses its appeal compared to competitors. If tourism’s impact on the host community becomes excessive, the destination deteriorates (“decline” stage). However, if proactive policies balance resources and demand, a destination may experience “rejuvenation”. This requires investments in new

Table 1

**Tourism Irritation Index (Doxey’s Irridex)**

<b>Development Stage</b>	<b>Resident Attitude</b>	<b>Possible Planning Measures</b>
Euphoria	Full acceptance and encouragement	Minimal planning and control
Apathy	Attitude becomes more formal	Marketing initiatives
Irritation	Critical levels of dissatisfaction, leading to public opposition	Attempts to redirect tourism, rather than restrict it
Antagonism	Open dissatisfaction, tourists seen as the source of problems	Significant planning adjustments

**Fig. 1. Tourism Area Evolution Concept (Butler’s Model)**

attractions or market diversification, such as expanding tourism seasons. Butler suggests that maintaining a destination's uniqueness is crucial but challenging under tourism development pressures.

Richard Butler outlined two possible paths to achieving the rejuvenation stage. One involves creating a new attraction, such as a casino or theme park. The other entails developing a new market, for instance, introducing a winter tourism season in addition to the existing summer season. Regardless of the chosen path to rejuvenation, both public and private investments are necessary. However, it is expected that the initial type of visitor – the “explorer” or “seeker” – will not return. Butler's model is somewhat pessimistic, as he assumes that maintaining a destination's unchanged attractiveness is highly unlikely given the pressures of tourism development. The only exception would be if the destination successfully preserves its uniqueness while withstanding the pressures of increasing visitation. However, even this seems implausible to Butler, considering that visitor preferences evolve over time. Butler appears not to consider that uniqueness itself can be sustained while its characteristics evolve and transform over time.

Similarly, Butler's theory can be seen as a critique of the conventional perception of tourism growth. When Butler developed his concept of the tourism area life cycle, his primary aim was to illustrate that the assumption of continuous visitor growth is flawed. Therefore, it would be advisable to shift perspectives, as those responsible for planning, developing, and managing destinations must anticipate changes in a destination's character and the transformations that increased visitation may cause. The model underscores that the resources forming the tourism offering are not infinite and, in some cases, may even be considered non-renewable [5, p. 374]. Nevertheless, Butler's description of his concept highlights the perspective of stakeholders favoring tourism development. “Successful reconstruction and rejuvenation” implies continuous growth and expansion, whereas

“decline” signifies a contraction of the visitor industry.

In line with the ideas of George Doxey, Richard Butler also predicts that resident attitudes will shift from approval to dissatisfaction and possible opposition at different stages of tourism development. Even though the life cycle model can be conceptualized in theory, different destinations experience the stages of the cycle in varied ways. Hypothetically, this suggests that the cycle stages correspond to varying visitor numbers across different destinations. Additionally, the time required for a destination to progress through each stage is not predetermined.

Applying Butler's model to contemporary urban destinations comes with certain caveats. Firstly, the model was developed long before the emergence of modern issues such as overtourism and the current structure of the visitor economy. In the 1970s and 1980s, budget airlines, platform-based economies such as Airbnb, and digital influences like Instagram and IT-driven tourism strategies did not exist as they do today. At the time of its development, the model was based on prior research, Butler's own observations, and the work of other scholars. The applicability of Butler's model for analyzing and interpreting contemporary urban tourism has also been questioned, given that it was initially designed to describe the life cycle of entire destinations rather than individual urban tourism sites [6].

Most Western researchers argue that the specific nature of tourism development in a city (often referred to as “microgeography”) cannot be reduced to the tourism area life cycle model. Similarly, throughout the continuum of tourism development and impact, perceptions and reactions among affected stakeholders will differ, and it is unrealistic to expect uniform evolution across the entire city. Studies confirm that urban tourism develops depending on location. However, in cities experiencing overtourism, responses have been reflected primarily in municipal policies rather than policies at the neighborhood or district level.

Thus, Butler's life cycle model appears to reflect the complex relationship between tourism development in a city and its impact at the level of municipal policymaking. Furthermore, Butler's discussions on urban tourism development do not indicate an unequivocal stagnation. One example is the potential for publicly managed and coordinated efforts toward development and renewal. The model itself suggests that the city changes and evolves alongside tourism development, making the very notion of a destination a contested phenomenon in the context of urban tourism.

As Western scholars J. Ashworth and S. Page note, "All cities are multifunctional; otherwise, they would not be cities. There is no such thing as an exclusively tourist city or even a solely tourist urban district, because if such a place existed, it would lack the diversity essential to urban character – after all, a seaside resort complex or a purely tourist amusement park is not a city" [7, p. 560].

Thus, separating tourism development as something distinct from other urban factors within Butler's model can be considered a construct for analytical and discussion purposes. Without this assumption, the model becomes ineffective, as the urban destination becomes too contradictory to fit within a rigid framework. The frequent use and application of Butler's tourism destination life cycle model in academic literature reinforce this interpretation. Moreover, Butler's early understanding of social impacts can be applied to contemporary tourism development contexts in various ways. Butler discussed social impacts arising when resources originally intended for local residents increasingly cater to visitors' needs and interests or are physically occupied by tourists. This can occur, for example, when the nature of the local economy shifts due to the higher purchasing power of visitors as a consumer group. Ultimately, this affects lifestyles, influencing both preferences and constraints on where people spend their time and what they consume from a commercial perspective. The relevance of such processes to contemporary understandings of social impact in urban tourism destinations has been reinforced

by empirical research on overtourism conducted since then.

One way to apply Butler's tourism life cycle model to more modern tourism development contexts is by modifying the definitions of some of its components. For instance, W. Brych and N. Galysh adapt the concept of "decline" to mean not just a decrease in tourist numbers. In their interpretation, "decline" can also signify the deterioration of elements that once defined a destination's quality, challenges in maintaining sustainable tourism, or a reduction in average tourist spending. Similarly, Butler's model can be adapted to describe the evolution of tourism within a city rather than an entire destination or the visitor economy as perceived by residents in broader terms [8, p. 158]. Moreover, focusing on why Butler's original life cycle model does not perfectly align with modern tourism development risks overlooking key contributions of the model. The idea of stages is one such crucial element. Utilizing the concept of stages in tourism analysis serves as a framework for studying how tourism evolves.

Analyzing potential and actual negative externalities of tourism development is crucial for tourism industry planning and management. This underscores the necessity of recognizing trade-offs in tourism development models to achieve a balance between leveraging the tourism industry for economic growth and cultural diversity on the one hand and protecting residents' interests on the other. Regardless of the terminology scholars use to define active tourism development – whether "smart exploitation", "responsible tourism", or "self-sufficiency approach" – a common theme across academic discourse is that tourism development management is a necessity. Market-driven approaches (self-regulation) are not considered the most appropriate or sustainable solutions. Some of the most debated issues in sustainable tourism development management include: "carrying capacity", "visitor impact management (VIM)", "limits of acceptable change (LAC)", and "visitor experience resource protection (VERP)" [9, p. 12].

Beyond mitigating negative impacts, it has been suggested that managing tourism develop-

ment with greater attention to physical constraints and often uneven resource distribution offers several advantages. Sandro Formica emphasizes that a thorough assessment of demand and supply potential in tourist destinations can yield both economic and socio-cultural benefits. Formica suggests that such benefits may include:

1. Identifying the foundations and resources necessary to enhance the quality of life for local residents;

2. Stimulating infrastructure development and recreational facilities for both residents and visitors;

3. Influencing the development of tourism-related facilities and services that align with the local area's characteristics and the cultural, social, and political profile of its inhabitants;

4. Developing tourism in a way that ensures all local resources are preserved for present and future use;

5. Integrating tourism policies with other policies developed at the regional level;

6. Establishing a reliable basis for decision-making and coordination between the private and public sectors;

7. Increasing overall visitor satisfaction;

8. Providing an effective tool for monitoring changes in tourism attractiveness and determining necessary actions (continuous monitoring) [10, p. 107].

It appears that the emphasis on the benefits of tourism planning has gained popularity in recent years, as tourism management motivation has evolved beyond merely mitigating negative impacts within tourism development policies.

Thus, the rationale for tourism management encompasses goals aimed at maximizing positive impacts rather than merely minimizing negative ones. Given that sustainable tourism can be developed to contribute to social sustainability objectives, this motivates strategies that seek to direct tourism toward achieving values beyond economic growth for those engaged in the tourism industry. This perspective is illustrated by recent tourism strategies and reports on tourism development from European destinations and marketing stakeholders. For example, during the European Cities Marketing confer-

ence in 2018, the front page of the event program stated: "Do not ask what your city can do for tourism development, but what tourism can do for your city!" This strategy can be summarized as follows: initially, tourism should be used to create better places for people to live, and subsequently, better places for tourists to visit. The goal is to manage the tourism industry in a way that prioritizes the interests of the local community, shaping the concept of responsible tourism.

This shift in perspective also signals a change in tourism research, where the key question is shifting from "how to protect the city from tourism" to "how to align the interests of city residents with tourism". This transition marks a departure from the dualistic logic of "tourists versus locals" toward a more integrated approach that considers tourism as a driver of urban development, particularly in the creation of new jobs. Such a research focus envisions tourism not merely as an economic strategy but as a lever for advancing urban development goals.

To fully grasp the complexity of defining the social dimension of sustainable tourism, it is useful to examine the origins of the concept of sustainable development. The idea of sustainability emerged from the global wave of environmental concern in the 1980s. A central principle of sustainability in this context was the idea of limitations. In the context of environmental impact, concepts such as "tipping point" and "carrying capacity" imply restrictions on resource use relative to certain changes in the physical environment [11]. Excessive exploitation of natural resources or impacts exceeding the tipping point or carrying capacity – for example, in a field or a lake – can theoretically lead to ecosystem changes. Such environmental consequences may be irreversible or difficult to remediate, making them undesirable and something to be avoided.

Similarly, when the concept of sustainability gained traction in discussions on urban tourism development in the 1990s, sustainable tourism was primarily associated with visible environmental impacts and calls for environmental protection. With a focus on the undesirable and negative effects that tourism can have on the physical environment, sustainable tourism



was often understood as small-scale tourism. The research of Alister Mathieson and Geoffrey Wall provided arguments for a broader definition of sustainable tourism. They advocated the idea that the negative consequences of tourism could occur both in the human world (cultural, social) and in the physical world (air and water quality, for example). Over time, it became widely accepted that sustainable development has a human component that is just as important as the traditional environmental one. However, the environmental origins of the concept have ontological implications that complicate its operationalization [12, p. 394]. While the notions of “tipping point” and “carrying capacity” can be defined with some degree of objectivity (though not with absolute precision) in the natural environment, the same cannot be done as easily for the human environment.

Regarding the concept of socially sustainable tourism, tipping points and carrying capacity may vary depending on the researcher defining the concept, the units of analysis considered, the emphasized aspects, and the multiple dimensions associated with the concept. Thus, while exceeding or not exceeding tourism carrying capacity or tipping points is often framed in terms of the binary opposition between “unsustainable” and “sustainable” tourism, defining sustainable levels of socially responsible resource consumption is more desirable for scholars in terms of environmental compatibility and accountability for human activities.

Therefore, sustainability goals in tourism inherently involve subjective perceptions of what levels, limits, or characteristics constitute the best or most reasonable use of often limited cultural, social, and spatial resources in urban tourism destinations. This means that the idea of social sustainability is inseparable from value judgments. In turn, this implies the inherent complexity associated with the contextual aspects of socially sustainable tourism. As Butler concludes: “It is unlikely... that there will ever be a universally accepted definition of sustainable tourism that can be applied universally...” The fact that social sustainability is value-laden and to some extent subjective has led scholars

to argue that stakeholder management is key to addressing sustainability issues in tourism.

The argument is that it is crucial to expose the social complexity of such issues by identifying all stakeholders, clearly defining their perspectives, and striving for mutual understanding – even if consensus is unlikely. Accordingly, D. Fodness perceives sustainable tourism as a complex issue for which there is no easy solution, and where stakeholders are unlikely to fully agree on how the problem should be defined [13, p. 165]. Thus, it should be treated as a “wicked problem”. The concept of wicked problems was first developed by J. Rittel and M. Webber. It describes issues for which no objectively correct solution exists and which are better regarded as manageable rather than solvable. This idea has also gained attention in tourism research.

Consequently, implementing the idea of sustainable development is challenging because scholars must first define it, which is ultimately a subjective – and therefore political – choice regarding what sustainability means. Nevertheless, defining sustainability is crucial, as without a definition, it is impossible to establish indicators for measurement. Without clear definitions and corresponding indicators for monitoring purposes, the idea of sustainable tourism risks remaining rhetorical rather than serving as a practical tool for tourism planning, development, and management. While the need for specific indicators is widely recognized, scholars debate what can and cannot be measured. For instance, K. Lindberg, S. McCool, and J. Stankey have argued that managing tourism through carrying capacity definitions has several shortcomings [14, p. 63]. First, defining carrying capacity often provides little guidance for practical implementation. Second, carrying capacity is perceived as a scientific and objective concept. Third, carrying capacity typically focuses on usage levels or visitor numbers, whereas management goals are often more concerned with qualitative conditions.

To circumvent the problem of setting quantitative limits on tourism for management purposes, S. McCool and D. Lime proposed that the ques-

tion “What number of visitors is critical?” be replaced with “Are appropriate and acceptable conditions being created for visitors?” [15, p. 38]. To address this reframing, planning frameworks such as “Visitor Experience and Resource Protection” (VERP) and “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) were developed. These frameworks shift focus from determining how many tourists a destination can accommodate to assessing the desirable or appropriate social conditions within a destination. This reframing has both advantages and disadvantages. While it is possible to objectively track and measure a critical number of visitors to some extent, it is significantly more difficult to quantify and measure desirable social conditions or the impact of inappropriate tourist behavior.

Nonetheless, for both sets of concerns, defining and using sustainability indicators are considered central components of the operational process in tourism planning and management. The operationalization of sustainable tourism is further complicated by the difficulty of isolating tourism from other behaviors or activities undertaken by non-visitors in a city. In their discussion of how visitors and non-visitors use urban spaces, J. Ashworth and S. Page draw on D. Burtonshaw’s framework. Burtonshaw’s concept, along with more recent studies, demonstrates that in certain destinations, the behavior of tourists and non-tourists (local residents) overlaps significantly. This further reinforces the idea that tourism is deeply embedded in urban attractions and infrastructure, most of which were not originally designed for tourism purposes. Moreover, in urban destinations, the number, diversity, and scale of both primary and secondary attractions are often extensive.

A key distinguishing feature of urban tourism is that it is just one of many forms of economic activity within a city, requiring competition with various other industries for resources such as labor and land. The visitor group itself is a mosaic of service users with diverse profiles in terms of activities, locations, duration of stay in specific places, and whether their visits are one-time or recurring. A significant number of tourists in urban areas, for example, visit with

a primary purpose distinct from pure leisure, including business or conference-related travel. To better understand different urban mobilities, habits, and the use of urban space, J. Novy proposes a framework consisting of five interrelated but distinct dimensions, namely:

1. (Urban) tourism.
2. (Temporary) lifestyle migration.
3. (Temporary) migration for work/study.
4. “Hidden tourism”.
5. Leisure and place consumption as part of everyday life.

Together, these categories represent components of individual behavior, illustrating how visitors utilize space, stay, dine, shop, and reside in the city more broadly. The significance of this framework lies in emphasizing that tourists, local residents, and other groups act in ways that intertwine with and influence the urban context. This makes considering the “tourist” as a homogeneous unit of analysis not only inadequate but also a moving target for policy development [16, p. 91]. Academic contributions on social sustainability and quality-of-life indicators can add nuance to urban planning for socially sustainable cities and, by extension, to defining sustainable tourism itself.

The concept of social sustainability has been explored by numerous scholars. Richard Butler, for instance, defines social sustainability as comprising two main conditions: “social equity” (with a particular focus on access to services and opportunities, essential local services such as shops, schools, healthcare facilities; recreational opportunities, open spaces; public transport; employment opportunities; affordable housing) and “community sustainability” (including neighborhood pride and attachment, social interaction within the district, the perceived quality of the local environment in terms of safety, housing satisfaction, stability, and participation in collective group/community activities).

O. Yiftachel and D. Hedgecock further propose an analysis that extends the concept of social stability to the urban sphere. They define urban social stability as “the sustained capacity of a city to function as a long-term viable environment for human interaction,

communication, and cultural development”. Additionally, “A socially sustainable city is characterized by vitality, solidarity, and a general sense of place among its inhabitants. Such a city is also marked by the absence of overt or violent intergroup conflict, explicit spatial segregation, or chronic political instability” [17, p. 146].

To operationalize the concept of social sustainability, this study presents a conceptual and analytical framework that allows for assessing the level of social sustainability in cities. The structure is based on three key dimensions: equity, community, and urban development, which can be used to evaluate and study urban policies and new city developments.

For Yiftachel and Hedgecock, the idea of equity is tied to what is, in many ways, the foundation of much modern planning theory – namely, the normative social obligation to citizens, materialized through public policy formulation and urban planning practices aimed at creating a more socially just urban environment [17, p. 154]. The pursuit of equity seeks to eliminate or minimize social issues associated with stratified and unequal urban societies, including manifestations such as civil unrest, which may arise when citizens lose trust in the democratic process. This distrust, in turn, is described as a result of, for instance, urban development being perceived as driven by market forces rather than community needs or as prioritizing commercial development over residential stability.

The concept of community, in turn, relates to notions of identity, social inclusion, behavior, and relationships. The idea of sustainable communities can be further elaborated through the thesis: “Sustainable communities are defined as ‘places where people want to live and work, both now and in the future.’ They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are environmentally sensitive, and promote a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well-planned, built, and operated, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all” [18, p. 146]. This definition underscores the physical (urban) context in which communities exist.

**Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research in This Area.** The discussion of urban-

ism in contrast to suburbanization highlights the necessity of recognizing the inherent value of multifunctional environments for the long-term sustainability of urban areas. Urbanization processes are increasingly shaping the development of tourism destinations, necessitating an adaptive approach to tourism management that integrates economic, environmental, and social sustainability. While much of the early literature on sustainable tourism focused primarily on environmental preservation, contemporary research underscores the need for a broader perspective – one that incorporates social equity, cultural heritage conservation, and the well-being of local communities.

The findings of this study reaffirm that tourism management should not be confined to minimizing negative impacts but should actively strive to maximize the positive contributions of tourism to urban life. Sustainable tourism can serve as a tool for fostering social cohesion, enhancing public infrastructure, and supporting local economies while maintaining cultural integrity. This requires a strategic shift in tourism policies, where the focus moves from “how to mitigate the effects of tourism” to “how to align tourism development with the interests of local communities and urban sustainability”.

Tourism should not be treated as an isolated sector but rather as an integral component of urban planning. The interdependence between tourism and other economic activities necessitates cross-sectoral collaboration, where tourism contributes to the broader socio-economic development of cities. Policies should emphasize place-making approaches, ensuring that cities are developed primarily for their residents, with tourism as a secondary yet valuable layer of economic activity.

The social dimension of sustainable tourism remains underdeveloped in many existing frameworks. While environmental conservation efforts are well-defined, the need for inclusive tourism policies that promote equity, accessibility, and community engagement must be further emphasized. The research underscores the importance of resident participation in tourism planning to ensure that tourism-related ben-

efits are equitably distributed and that communities retain control over local resources.

Traditional concepts of carrying capacity, which focus on limiting visitor numbers, should be supplemented with qualitative measures that assess the broader socio-cultural and environmental impact of tourism. Frameworks such as “Visitor Experience and Resource Protection” (VERP) and “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) offer more nuanced approaches to sustainable tourism management by prioritizing desirable social and environmental conditions over rigid numerical thresholds.

The complexity of urban tourism necessitates a governance model that is participatory and adaptive. Policymakers should foster collaboration between municipal authorities, businesses, cultural institutions, and local communities to co-create sustainable tourism strategies. Transparent decision-making processes and long-term vision planning will be crucial in mitigating conflicts between stakeholders and ensuring a balanced approach to urban tourism development.

Sustainable tourism presents an opportunity for urban renewal, particularly in post-industrial and heritage-rich cities. By integrating tourism with cultural preservation and creative industries, cities can enhance their global appeal while safeguarding local traditions. Tourism initiatives should prioritize authenticity and place identity, avoiding mass tourism models that erode cultural distinctiveness.

While this study contributes to the understanding of sustainable urban tourism management, several areas require further exploration:

Measuring the social impact of tourism. The operationalization of social sustainability indicators remains a challenge, as concepts such as quality of life, community well-being, and cultural resilience are inherently subjective. Future research should develop standardized methodologies to quantify the social effects of tourism on urban populations.

The role of digitalization in sustainable tourism management. The increasing influence of digital platforms (e.g., Airbnb, TripAdvisor, Instagram) on tourism behaviors necessitates a deeper understanding of how technology can be leveraged to promote sustainability. Research should examine the potential of smart tourism solutions, real-time visitor monitoring, and AI-driven urban planning to mitigate overtourism.

Resilience and crisis management in tourism development. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the vulnerability of the tourism sector to external shocks. Future studies should explore how cities can build resilience against economic downturns, climate change, and geopolitical crises while maintaining long-term tourism sustainability.

Comparative analysis of urban tourism models across global contexts. Different cities implement varying approaches to tourism governance, with some prioritizing strict visitor regulations while others adopt open-market strategies. Cross-cultural research on best practices and policy outcomes could provide valuable insights for cities seeking to optimize their tourism strategies.

The sustainable management of urban tourism is not merely a technical challenge but a broader societal endeavor requiring strategic foresight, stakeholder collaboration, and a commitment to equitable development. As tourism continues to evolve, so too must our frameworks for integrating it within sustainable urban policies. Moving beyond traditional tourism paradigms, a holistic and community-centered approach is essential to ensuring that tourism remains a force for positive transformation rather than a source of socio-environmental degradation.

Ultimately, sustainable tourism should not be viewed as an isolated policy goal but as a guiding principle for urban governance – one that aligns tourism growth with the broader objectives of economic vitality, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

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