

# A Comparison of Community Perceptions on Responsible and Sustainable Tourism

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**Abstract:** One important way to carry out a pro-poor, pro-community, and sustainable initiative is via responsible tourism. Despite being relatively new, the word is receiving a lot of attention globally. However, since its fundamental ideas are similar, it is sometimes mistaken for sustainable tourism. Thus, by looking at how locals see tourist locations, this essay aims to evaluate the theoretical underpinnings of both ideas. First, 387 people of four popular tourist locations in the Indian state of Kerala were given a standardized survey questionnaire. After the data was analyzed, it was shown that there is a strong correlation between sustainable tourism and responsible tourism. Additionally, the former achieves the latter's goals in a manner that makes it a condensed form of sustainable tourism rather than anything distinct from it. Responsible tourism is an action component with more real-world applications, while sustainable tourism is more of a theoretical idea. As a result, the results provide scholars and decision-makers guidance on how to define and use both ideas at different levels

**Keywords:** Responsible Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Community Perceptions

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pro-poor tourism (Michot, 2010), community tourism (Woodley, 1992; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Saji and Narayanasamy, 2010; Guzmán et al., 2011), responsible tourism (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Kerala Declaration, 2008; Mathew and Koshy, 2014; Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017), eco-tourism (Herath, 2002; Stem et al., 2003; Das and Syiemlieh, 2009), and sustainable tourism (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Godfrey, 1998) are examples of how tourism is linked to sustainability concepts. Responsible tourism is one of these ideas that has only lately come into prominence and attracted a lot of interest from professionals (Mihalic, 2014).

It is described as a sustainable development project that aims to improve the local community's quality of life by reducing environmental problems and increasing economic, social, and cultural advantages, therefore providing tourists with a better vacation experience (DEAT, 1996). Since both responsible and sustainable tourism have developed from the well-known concept of sustainable development, they have been combined into a single paradigm known as the triple bottom line (TBL) approach (Elkington, 2018).

Initiatives have, nonetheless, multiplied under these names and contributed a variety of discoveries to the relevant literature; Pro-poor tourism (Michot, 2010), community tourism (Woodley, 1992; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Saji and Narayanasamy, 2010; Guzmán et al., 2011), responsible tourism (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Kerala Declaration, 2008; Mathew and Koshy, 2014; Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017), eco-tourism (Herath, 2002; Stem et al., 2003; Das and Syiemlieh, 2009), and sustainable tourism (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Godfrey, 1998) are examples of how tourism is linked to sustainability concepts.

Responsible tourism is one of these ideas that has only lately come into prominence and attracted a lot of interest from professionals (Mihalic, 2014). It is described as a sustainable development project that aims to improve the local community's quality of life by reducing environmental problems and increasing economic, social, and cultural advantages, therefore providing tourists with a better vacation experience (DEAT, 1996). Since both responsible and sustainable tourism have developed from the well-known concept of sustainable development, they have been combined

into a single paradigm known as the triple bottom line (TBL) approach (Elkington, 2018). Initiatives using these labels have, nonetheless, multiplied and contributed a variety of discoveries to the relevant literature.

### CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the early 1990s, the idea of responsible tourism (RT) was developed (Smith, 1990; Cooper and Ozdil, 1992). The first official reference was in A White Paper on The Development and Promotion of Tourism (DEAT, 1996), which stated that responsible tourism, which was previously defined as "about enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life through increased socio-economic benefits and improved natural resource management," had emerged from discussions as the most appropriate concept for the sustainable development of tourist destinations in South Africa (Spenceley et al., 2002).

The Cape Town Declaration, which came about as a result of the First International Conference on Responsible Tourism in 2002, described RT as travel that "creates better places for people to live in, and better places to visit" (Cape Town, 2009). Better vacation experiences for visitors and profitable economic prospects for tourism firms were subsequently highlighted in the Responsible Tourism Manual for South Africa (Spenceley et al., 2002).

Following the Kerala government's 2007 adoption of responsible tourism as a vision and the 2008 release of the Kerala Declaration on Responsible Tourism, which defined RT as a tourism management strategy embracing planning, product development, management, and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, the idea gained popularity. The goal for tourism operators is to provide visitors more fulfilling vacation experiences while also preserving the environment and allowing local populations to live better lives (Kerala Declaration, 2008). In the domains of economics, society, culture, and environment, responsible tourism explicitly outlines accountability (DEAT, 1996; Cape Town Declaration, 2002; Kerala Declaration, 2008; KRTC, 2012).

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The phrase "sustainable development" (Butler, 1991; Stabler, 1997; Mowforth and Munt, 1998), which was first used in the 1980s (WCED, 1987) and is regarded as the starting point of sustainability movements throughout the globe, is where this idea first emerged. "Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," according to the United Nations-commissioned Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (WCED, 1987).

Sustainable tourism is described by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as satisfying the demands of current visitors and host communities while preserving and expanding prospects for future travel. It is intended to result in the management of all resources in a manner that preserves biological variety, vital ecological processes, cultural integrity, and life support systems while meeting economic, social, and aesthetic demands (WTO, 2001).

As a result, ST takes into account the needs of tourists, businesses, and local communities in addition to the social, economic, and environmental effects that are occurring now and in the future. Although ST is defined as all forms of tourism (Liu, 2003), it is firmly founded on the three tenets of economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Purvis et al., 2019). According to Cater (1993), enhancing local populations' quality of life, meeting the requirements of tourists, and preserving the environment should be the main goals of sustainable tourism. Farrell (1999) also suggested integrating the sustainability trinity local economy, society, and environment. Comparably, Inskeep (1991) established five primary standards for sustainable tourism that tackled the obligations to visitors, global justice, and equality on the one hand, and the economic, social, and environmental duties on the other.

### RT-ST RELATIONSHIP

Since both responsible and sustainable tourism are founded on the same triple bottom line (TBL) idea (Krippendorff, 1982; Elkington, 1994), there is a strong correlation between the two (Smith, 1990; DEAT, 1996; Sharpley, 2000; Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012; Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). In general, RT and ST focus on the social, economic, and environmental aspects of tourism growth in vacation spots. Sustainable tourism requires the preservation of local sociocultural, environmental, and economic aspects, according to a number of researchers (English Tourist Board, 1991;

Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Hawkes and Williams, 1993; Briguglio et al., 1996; Sharpley, 2000; WTO, 2001; Buckley, 2012; GSTC, 2015).

The three pillars of economic, social, and environmental sustainability were established in Agenda 21, the action plan that resulted from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio (UN, 2002). Later, in order to guarantee that the legacy, culture, and unique customs of host communities are respected and enhanced, cultural sustainability in tourism was also established (Craik, 1995; Wall, 1997; Butler, 1998; UNEP and WTO, 2005). The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) included the cultural factor in its performance assessment criteria for tourism destinations and businesses in addition to TBL (GSTC, 2015).

Additionally, the triple bottom line method is embraced by responsible tourism (DEAT, 1996; Spenceley et al., 2002; Kerala Declaration, 2008; Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). The 1996 South African White Paper (1996) concentrated on managing and promoting the economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects of tourism as well as tracking and evaluating its effects on the environment and society (Spenceley et al., 2002).

Similar to this, the Kerala Tourism Policy (2012) outlined its standards for responsible tourism, emphasizing the environmental, social, cultural, and economic aspects (DEAT, 1996; Kerala Declaration, 2008; Kerala Responsible Tourism Criteria (KRTC), 2012). According to the Cape Town Declaration, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism have the same objective, which is sustainable development. Because of this, the principles of sustainable tourism and responsible tourism are inextricably linked (Cape Town, 2009).

Lastly, Frey and George (2010) came to the conclusion that these strategies share the goal of avoiding adverse social, economic, and environmental repercussions while optimizing the benefits of tourist growth (p.). In conclusion, RT and ST are conceptually one and include environmental, social, cultural, and economic factors. Economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability are the characteristics of RT and ST that the scholars debated and agreed upon. The indicators and theoretical underpinnings of these concepts were then experimentally investigated in order to generate hypotheses on their dimensions and constructs and to comprehend their relationship. The research was restricted to examining sustainable development objectives from a community viewpoint.

## METHODOLOGY

Since this study's primary goal is to comprehend the theoretical underpinnings and community viewpoint of sustainable and responsible tourism, locals' comprehension of these ideas is taken into account. A scale was modified from the Kerala government's responsible tourism standards (KRTC, 2012) to gauge their comprehension of responsible tourism: Each of the 15 questions, which addressed the four first-order aspects, was scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree."

The first dimension, economic responsibility, talks about how tourism may help local communities by creating jobs and generating revenue. The community's empowerment and engagement in the creation and administration of the destination are the focus of the second factor, social responsibility. The third factor, cultural responsibility, highlights how tourism contributes to historical preservation and the advancement of traditional art and culture. The understanding among locals that tourism shouldn't have a detrimental impact on the environment is reflected in the fourth dimension, environmental responsibility.

A 25-item measure, which again uses a five-point Likert-type scale, was modified from the UNEP and WTO (2005) recommendations for sustainable tourism in order to evaluate the same four first-order elements of sustainable tourism. Residents' perceptions of tourism as a source of regular income for their town are referred to as economic sustainability. Tourism that provides equitable employment and revenue distribution to the community is referred to be socially sustainable.

Residents' understanding of the importance of tourism in identifying and conserving regional customs, artwork, and culture while avoiding its exploitation is shown in cultural sustainability. Lastly, environmental sustainability refers to the measures taken to prevent tourism from having a detrimental effect on the environment. Four foreign tourist attractions in the Indian state of Kerala Kovalam, Kochi, Kumarakom, and Thekkady were the subject of this research. The Kerala government began implementing responsible and sustainable tourism activities in these locations in 2007. Respondents

were chosen by systematic random selection from the sample frame of residents who were 18 years of age or older and lived in these locations.

By dividing the total number of inhabitants in each destination as determined by the voters' list by the total number of respondents needed, the researchers were able to determine the sample interval. Then, using a random number table, the researchers chose homes between 1 and the sample interval. Between January and May 2016, these homes were visited in order to gather answers and demographic information from the residents using a standardized survey questionnaire. Only 359 (93%) of the 387 respondents that filled out the survey were useful; Table 1 reveals that 64% of these respondents are female and 62% had resided in the specific location for more than 30 years. Regarding occupation, 46% of respondents are daily wage earners, tour guides, farmers, and other agricultural workers, while 14% are company owners, 7% are government employees, and 33% are professionals working for private firms. Nearly 75% of those surveyed were older than 30.

**TABLE-1. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS**

Category	Range & %	Range & %	Range & %	Range & %
Age	18–30	30–50	Above 50	
Gender	26% Female	53% Male	21%	
Years of Residence	64% 1-10 5% Business	36% 10-20 11% Govt. Sector	20-30 22% Private Companies	Above 30 62% Other
Occupation	14%	7%	33%	46%

## DATA ANALYSIS

The research first looked for outliers and missing numbers in the date, but it didn't find any. Subsequent analyses showed that all values for the standardized items fell within the range of  $\pm 1.96$ , while skewness and kurtosis were in the range of 0 and 3, respectively. This indicates that the responses are free of both skewness and kurtosis, supporting the multivariate normality hypothesis (Norusis, 1990; Chou and Bentler, 1995; Hair et al., 1998).

To make sure the ideas and measurement models were valid, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were also carried out. The dependability of all four measurement models for responsible and sustainable tourism is estimated by Cronbach's alpha, which is above 0.70 and at an acceptable level (Field, 2005). Table 2 demonstrates this. Variance owing to measurement error is less than that captured by the factor, as shown by the fact that the variance explained for all four dimensions of both concepts above the minimal criterion of 0.50. Additionally, the data were deemed suitable for principal component analysis by the Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, which was above 0.5.

**TABLE-2. FACTOR LOADINGS, VARIANCE EXPLAINED, AND OTHER VALIDITY MEASURES**

Concepts and Dimensions	Loading	Eigenvalues	Variance Explained
Responsible Tourism			
Economic responsibility	0.887		31.73%
Employment opportunities	0.784		
Participation of local people in	0.821	3.23	
<b>Socio-cultural sustainability</b>			
Encouragement of local cultures	0.802		47.42%
Cultural responsibility	0.804	2.87	
Preservation of local art and traditions	0.803		
Preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions (CHT)	0.804		
<b>Environmental sustainability</b>			
Effects on natural environments	0.827	2.71	41.67%
Waste minimization	0.805		

Waste management	0.802		
<b>Sustainable tourism</b>	0.846		
Economic sustainability	0.857		
Socio-cultural opportunities	0.803		
Improved living standards	0.826		
<b>Social sustainability</b>	0.832		36.26%
Achievements of the underprivileged	0.809		
Local community empowerment	0.810		
Traffic and local congestion	0.796		
Infrastructure development	0.753		
Disabled-friendly environment	0.739		
Creation of educational centers	0.721		
<b>Environmental sustainability</b>	0.871		41.67%
Conservation awareness	0.803		
Pollution control	0.792		
Industrial response	0.769		
Disasters and hazard	0.742		
Protection of natural environment	0.736		

To verify the validity and reliability of both ideas, CFAs were conducted for each dimension. In addition to the basic Chi-square test, the study used the comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean residual (SRMR) to assess the measurement model's goodness of fit. Four first-order dimensions made up the higher order factor, which was shown to fit the data extremely well by the responsible tourism measurement model (c2: 218.12, df: 227; CFI: 0.94; IFI: 0.93; SRMR: 0.041; RMSEA: 0.043). Four first-order dimensions made up the second-order factor, which likewise indicated an appropriate match for sustainable tourism (c2: 228.21, df: 228; CFI: 0.93; IFI: 0.96; SRMR: 0.05; RMSEA: 0.042).

Following the example of Netemeyer et al. (2003), this research investigated the validity and reliability of the first-order dimensions and discovered convergent validity and reliability. In order to comprehend the connection between the ideas of responsible and sustainable tourism, as well as the related aspects of economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, the hypotheses were examined. Regression analysis revealed that 84% of the variation (VE) with sustainable tourism was explained by respondents' views of responsible tourism. Further analysis of the path coefficients revealed that their positive opinion of responsible tourism had a substantial impact on their opinion of sustainable tourism ( $\beta = 0.92$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

The findings also demonstrated that their positive assessment of the positive aspects of responsible tourism had a significant impact on their positive assessment of the following aspects of sustainable tourism: environmental and environmental sustainability ( $\beta = 0.65$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $VE = 40\%$ ); social and social sustainability ( $\beta = 0.93$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $VE = 79\%$ ); cultural and cultural sustainability ( $\beta = 0.77$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $VE = 55\%$ ); and economic and economic sustainability ( $\beta = 0.85$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $VE = 66\%$ ). A strong association between the factors and the consequent explanatory power of responsible tourism on sustainable tourism is confirmed by the study's results.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research made an effort to examine and comprehend the fundamental relationship between sustainable tourism and responsible travel. It was noted that locals in the chosen locations saw responsible tourism as a means of promoting sustainable travel. The four first-order elements of responsible and sustainable tourism social, economic, cultural, and environmental were also acknowledged to be present in the local population's perception. The impression of sustainable tourism in the community was substantially correlated with all four aspects of responsible tourism.

Similarly, it is evident from every angle that responsible tourism has a greater explanatory power than sustainable tourism and that the former has a negative influence on the latter. 84% of the variation (VE) with sustainable tourism was explained by respondents' views of responsible tourism, which is greater than average and has a substantial impact on how they perceive sustainable tourism ( $\beta = 0.92$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Significant relationships were also found between the consequences of the several aspects of sustainable and responsible tourism. As previously stated, the triple bottom line of sustainable development economic, sociocultural, and environmental is the foundation of both sustainable and responsible tourism.

As a key contributor, responsible tourist practices have a big impact on sustaining sustainable tourism at a place; similarly, each premise has a big impact on the others. To provide academics and practitioners with clarity, further research is necessary to fully understand the theoretical and practical ramifications of these notions. According to Smith (1990), Hunter (1997), Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal (2012), Mathew and Sreejesh (2017), and others, responsible tourism is often seen as a driver of sustainable development and, therefore, the sustainability of a destination.

Its strategy emphasizes the standard of living for locals as well as the destination. Actually, according to Leslie (2012), responsible tourism aims to minimize any negative effects by enhancing working conditions, facilitating community involvement, preserving cultural heritage, and safeguarding the environment. It is also concerned with people, the environment, values, and culture. The notion of sustainable tourism is still difficult to understand, nevertheless, and attempts to do so have been deemed insufficient and erroneous (Cocklin, 1995; Hunter and Green, 1995; Swarbrooke, 1999; Liu, 2003; Miller and Twining-Ward, 2005; Lane, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). Furthermore, there is no universally accepted method for measuring the growth of sustainable tourism, mostly because its practical applications are unclear and its implementation is challenging (Wheeler, 1993; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012).

Since a comprehensive list of sustainable tourism indicators in various forms has been produced so far (Ecetat and Ecotrans, 2004; UNWTO, 2004; TSG, 2007; EC, 2014; GSTC, 2015), the idea has been referred to as "intellectually appealing" rather than "practically oriented" (Wheeler, 1993). In fact, the contradiction of using a sustainable development model to promote different types of tourism such as eco-, green, alternative, responsible, soft, pro-poor, communal, accessible, or low-impact tourism shows that sustainable tourism is more of a conceptual phrase.

According to Liu (2003), these eco-friendly tourist models have to be seen as tactics for attaining sustainability, which calls for innovations at the field level. Furthermore, since it considers the market and visitor pleasure (UNWTO, 2004; Mihalic, 2014), sustainable tourism is closely related to the idea of carrying capacity (Butler, 2011). A balanced triangle interaction between people, host places and their environments, and the tourist industry where no stakeholder upsets the equilibrium is what Lane (2009) defined as sustainable tourism.

Although Mihalic (2014) asserts that in sustainable tourism, environmental concerns are of the utmost importance and economic performance is of the utmost importance (Bohdanowicz et al., 2005; Blackstock et al., 2008; Bramwell et al., 2008; Mihalic et al., 2012), it has also been explained in terms of economic and environmental dimensions (Hunter, 1995; Coccossis, 1996; Swarbrooke, 1999; Baros and David, 2007). As a result, academics see sustainable tourism more as a strategy or idea. According to Mihalic (2014) and Leslie (2012), responsible tourism is a behavioral characteristic. In terms of accountability and activities, responsible tourism is essentially different from sustainable tourism: stakeholders assume accountability and take initiative to accomplish sustainable tourism development (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012). It is a location-specific, community-driven project that impacts the standard of living for locals.

The main forces behind responsible tourism are local government ownership and diverse stakeholder accountability, which is vital for accelerating corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that require community development and participatory planning (Merwe and Wocke, 2006). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Kumarakom is a location that is leading the way in responsible tourism. The 2014 Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards also acknowledged Kumarakom for its efforts.

According to recent discussions, responsible tourism is a sound idea that is closely related to sustainability efforts and heavily emphasizes sustainable development (Miotallevi, 2013; TSG, 2007, 2012; Blackstock et al., 2008; WTO General Assembly, 1999). While responsible tourism may be tailored to local circumstances, sustainable tourism can be used globally (Meyer and Helfman, 1993). Additionally, responsible tourism is a more action-oriented aspect of sustainable

tourism, while sustainable tourism as a theoretical term is more associated with understanding of sustainability (Mihalic, 2014).

To put it simply, responsible tourism ought to be seen as a driver of sustainable development in a place. The idea that responsible and sustainable tourism have the same goal sustainable development is generally supported by the study's results. Although responsible tourism is not new or distinct, it is not the same as sustainable tourism. According to responsible tourism, sustainable tourism is accomplished by accepting accountability for one's activities. Furthermore, the results showed that the community's opinion of sustainable tourism at that location is significantly influenced by its perspective of responsible tourism.

### SCOPE AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study's first drawback was its definition and measurement model for sustainable tourism, which has many interpretations and evaluation scales since it emerged from sustainable development. Triangulation is ideally necessary for sustainability in order to identify the stakeholders, which may include both locals and visitors as well as market participants. Furthermore, despite the fact that responsible tourism is widely accepted as a tactic for sustainable destination management and community development, the difficulty is exacerbated by the paucity of empirical data that explains it in terms of quantifiable and scientifically assessed values. However, the research solely focused on local people's perspectives and used the triple bottom line method and the fundamentals of sustainable development to define the constructs and choose the variables. However, the research might be expanded by using a triangulation approach to include more variables and the opinions of many stakeholders.

Additional innovation of the scales might be investigated to comprehend the destination in terms of its dynamics, as destination-specific research can provide more significant results for tourism. There are several additional ideas with similar ideas but different names. The theoretical underpinnings of several more notions with comparable substance but different names might also benefit from further research. Lastly, because the perspectives of businesspeople and visitors were not included in this research, the effects on the host community might potentially be investigated further.

### II. CONCLUSION

This research made an effort to comprehend the fundamental role that the two ideas of sustainable and responsible tourism play. After data analysis, it was determined that both ideas were founded on the triple bottom line principle and had sustainable development as their common goal. Additionally, it has been shown that responsible tourism greatly explains and supports sustainable tourism. The literature study found that since sustainable tourism must include the opinions of travelers, industry participants, and the community, it is wide, ill-defined, and challenging to define. However, by establishing a robust institutional framework to support it, responsible tourism has been shown to be a sustainable kind of travel that prioritizes the host community's quality of life.

Responsible tourism is seen as an action element with real-world applications when sustainable tourism is presented as a theoretical idea. Despite having many similarities, responsible tourism has the added benefit of being a relatively recent movement that specifies stakeholders' responsibilities as starting particular initiatives for the sustainable management of tourist places. A well-designed institutional system, destination-level ownership, and stakeholder participation particularly from the government, business, and community are all necessary for sustainable management. In order to manage and grow tourist attractions in a sustainable manner, responsible tourism should be embraced as a model effort.

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