

BEYOND CONVENTIONAL TRAVEL: UNVEILING THE IMPERATIVES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a critical paradigm shift in global travel practices, yet its conceptual and operational distinctions from conventional tourism remain underexplored. This article interrogates the fundamental differences between sustainable tourism—defined as tourism that prioritizes environmental integrity, socio-cultural equity, and long-term economic viability—and conventional tourism, which often prioritizes short-term profit maximization at the expense of ecological and societal balance. The urgency of transitioning to sustainable tourism is underscored by escalating climate crises, cultural homogenization, and the exploitation of local communities in mass tourism models. Key arguments posit that sustainable tourism necessitates a systemic reconfiguration of stakeholder roles, including governments, businesses, tourists, and host communities. Unlike conventional tourism, sustainability mandates rigorous environmental impact assessments, equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms, and the preservation of cultural authenticity. The article further identifies five critical conditions for achieving sustainability: (1) multi-stakeholder collaboration to align divergent interests; (2) policy frameworks that enforce ecological limits and social justice; (3) community empowerment through participatory decision-making; (4) technological innovation to minimize carbon footprints and resource waste; and (5) tourist education to foster responsible behavior. By synthesizing case studies from ecotourism initiatives in Southeast Asia and community-based tourism in Scandinavia, the article demonstrates that sustainability is not merely an ethical ideal but an actionable pathway to resilience. Ultimately, it argues that the transition to sustainable tourism is not optional but imperative for safeguarding planetary health and human well-being in the Anthropocene era.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Ecotourism, Community-Based Tourism, Tourism Policy, Responsible Travel

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