Martina Pásková
Josef Zelenka

Social Responsibility in Tourism

Applications, Best-Practices, and Case Studies

Tourism on the Verge

Series Editor

Ulrike Gretzel, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

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Springer

Martina Pásková 🆔
University of Hradec Králové
Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

Josef Zelenka 🆔
University of Hradec Králové
Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

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About the Book

This book explores the fundamental principles of social, cultural, environmental, and economic responsibility in tourism development, examining their relationship to sustainable tourism. It highlights the significance of local conditions in this context and discusses the challenges, opportunities, and problems and barriers associated with implementing responsible tourism. The aim is to guide tourism actors toward seeking balanced alternatives to current tourism development practices that can preserve or even improve conditions for future development.

Combining theoretical perspectives with practical insights, the book provides a comprehensive understanding of the principles, contexts, and circumstances surrounding responsible tourism approaches. It includes references to other sources of information, along with diagrams, and offers an overview and discussion of how social responsibility is applied by various tourism actors, including individuals, businesses, organizations, and destination management bodies. Concrete examples, case studies, and holistic approaches to addressing the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism are given special emphasis.

This book is intended for anyone willing to acknowledge the shortcomings of current tourism development and understand the reasons behind its lack of sustainability. It aims to attract those interested in finding solutions to critical issues in tourism, revealing the potential and proven effects of tourism responsibility. In essence, the book primarily serves as a guide for tourism actors seeking to adopt more sustainable practices.

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction to Topic

A consistent and globally implemented sustainable tourism has been a goal for nearly half a century, sought by tourism practitioners and experts from various scientific disciplines. However, as of 2024, when this book was completed, significant progress has been made in managing critical factors of tourism development (e.g. [1]) and conducting holistic research into sustainable tourism. This progress mainly stems from applying insights from disciplines like sociology, ecology, anthropology, philosophy, economy, geography, management and psychology. By taking this interdisciplinary approach, we gain a deeper understanding of tourism development conditions and factors, enhancing our ability to ensure sustainability.

Increasingly, sustainability in tourism is linked with promoting responsible behaviour amongst tourism actors (e.g. [2, 3, 4, 5]). This includes participants, managers, intermediaries, service providers and local and Indigenous peoples. Their growing level of responsibility is pivotal for practically implementing sustainable tourism ([6]).

The SARS-COV-2 pandemic offers a great opportunity for fundamental changes in tourism. Authors such as Cave, Dredge [7], Higgins-Desbiolles [8, 9], Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles, Ruhanen [10] and Talwar et al. [11] argue that this pandemic a global tourism crisis ([12]) prompts us to reevaluate tourism's benefits and adverse effects. It also encourages exploring alternatives like virtual reality tourism and online events, which gained prominence during the pandemic ([11]). These challenges have sparked broader efforts to reform tourism with "*wider efforts to reform tourism to be more ethical, responsible and sustainable*" ([9]:1).

The pandemic's lockdown measures provided unique conditions for evaluating tourism's impacts, highlighting both its benefits and its damages to destinations. This led to increased interest in slowing down tourism intensity and growth rates (Sharpley [13, 14]), advocating for concepts like "Degrowth in tourism" ([13, 14, 15, 16, 17]). This approach prioritises the rights of local residents over those of tourists and tourism entrepreneurs, emphasising travel closer to home. Additionally, the

pandemic underscored the importance of sustainable business practices for enhancing the tourism industry's resilience against similar crises ([18, 19, 20]).

Transitioning to low-carbon and potentially carbon-free processes in tourism is a fundamental challenge, given the accelerating impacts of climate change. Implementing social responsibility in tourism offers both global and local opportunities to mitigate and adapt to these effects ([21]).

Currently, the long-term impacts of tourism are socially unacceptable, economically unreasonable and environmentally unsustainable. The tourism economy generates significant externalities and self-destructive effects, resembling the tragedy of the commons. In this way, the potential for tourism development is destroyed by tourism itself. Unequal distribution of tourism's benefits and negative impacts leads to decreasing local acceptance of tourism. Moreover, the gradual destruction of nature and local landscapes is perceived negatively by both locals and visitors. The concept of "regenerative tourism" seeks to extend the benefits of tourism to the regeneration of local ecosystems, cultures and economies, requiring innovative approaches ([22, 23, 24]).

This publication explores the principles of sustainable tourism development, focusing on social, environmental and economic dimensions of responsible tourism. It emphasises the benefits, local specificities, shared values and appropriate approaches. The aim is to promote sustainable tourism development by fostering responsible behaviour amongst tourism actors. This includes grassroots actors like local and Indigenous peoples, as well as professionals such as destination managers and tourism service providers. These experts must understand tourism comprehensively, considering its impacts on a wider scale and over a longer timeframe.

The publication is based on the current state of knowledge about social responsibility in tourism. It brings original findings from the authors' research and aspires to interdisciplinary integration of this knowledge into a consistent system with an emphasis on applying theoretical concepts and practical examples from economics, geography, sociology, psychology, ethics, environmental studies, ecology and anthropology. It includes illustrative case studies, examples of good practice and an analysis of selected sustainable forms of tourism such as volunteer tourism, ecotourism and geotourism, which assume a minimum level of responsibility on both the supply and demand side of tourism. The term social responsibility is used to distinguish general social responsibility from the narrower meaning emphasising the social-cultural dimension of social responsibility (see Sect. 3.2.1).

Throughout this book, there is a strong emphasis on a proactive approach to responsibility taken by tourism operators, intermediaries, destination managers and participants. They aim to minimise or eliminate the negative impacts of their activities on society and the environment. The alternative approach, which involves compensating for negative impacts with projects that benefit society, should only be considered when it is impossible to avoid the negative impacts. Responsible action by tourism actors involves three dimensions: cognitive (learning about tourism's effects), ethical (incorporating this knowledge into decision-making) and relational/emotional (developing personal connections to affected people and places).

In the realm of responsible tourism implementation, tourism actors define their roles concerning natural and cultural heritage, local communities, other tourism actors and society. For example, when proposing tourism development focused on a destination's environmental or socio-cultural qualities, it is crucial to evaluate potential negative impacts such as reduced quality or unwanted changes in the area's character. Tourism stakeholders must acknowledge their role in these changes and weigh the undesirable impacts against expected benefits, discussing these values with experts and the affected public.

From the tourist's perspective according to Zelenka and Pásková [25], responsibility is evident in various choices, including destination selection (e.g. [26]), transportation modes (Fig. 6.6), accommodation preferences (e.g. favouring locally run facilities), tourism activities (e.g. opting for low-impact forms like ecotourism and geotourism), and engagement with local culture and customs. Developing basic language skills and using them to interact with the local community and create an unmediated relationship with them ([27]), choosing gifts and food to buy (preference for local cuisine and souvenirs) and guides (preference for locals) is also important. Responsibilities of tourism participants are discussed in detail in Sect. 5.6.

In the case of providers and intermediaries of tourism services and destination management, this responsibility is mainly manifested in:

- Respect for the local community, its needs and values, lifestyle, culture, customs, traditions etc.
- Determining the degree and manner of local community involvement in the provision of tourism services, tourist attractions with a preference for local community participation and in tourism products. Positive confirmation of the possibility of local community participation and the conditions for such participation are reported by Hamilton and Alexander [28]. Deery, Jago and Fredline [29], amongst others, state that local people and the life of local communities are an important part of tourism products, local people need to be allowed to participate in the decision-making process, and the impacts of tourism on them should be closely monitored.
- Determining the intensity and forms of tourism development, including the level and type of tourism infrastructure development.
- Deciding the extent and manner of local communities' inclusion in the offer of tourism products.
- Reducing the level of negative impacts of their activities, in particular, by implementing EMS (Environmental Management System), green management and consistent waste management, as described in detail in Sects. 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.
- Compensating local people, communities and the biosphere in general for the unavoidable environmental impacts of tourism on the destination (Sect. 3.5).

In addition to social responsibility for the consequences of the provision of tourism services and regional responsibility, the responsibility of tourism for reducing global problems is also declared and implemented. This responsibility focuses, in particular, on the problems of global warming, tropical rainforest area reduction,

xenophobia and tensions in the world, and the protection and conservation of geo-diversity, cultural diversity and biodiversity (on the application of social responsibility in relation to biodiversity conservation, see Marsden et al. [30]). This global responsibility is identified and declared (e.g. the UN WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism) and, above all, implemented through practical activities. These include the introduction of green management, airline carbon offset programmes and a preference for the development of appropriate forms of tourism. In a number of studies (e.g. [31, 32, 33]), the extent to which ecotourism contributes to the protection of biodiversity, including the protection of tropical rainforests, is specifically discussed with regard to the way social responsibility is implemented.

The role of guides, animators and interpreters, who directly interact with visitors, is crucial in shaping visitors' perceptions and acceptance of local culture. At the same time, they also have a significant influence on the willingness of visitors to accept local culture and on their possible enrichment with local specificities and culture, including "other dimensions" of reality (Fig. 1.1). The ability to accept the specificities of another culture, and even to enrich one's mental and emotional world with them, increases the level of respect and responsibility for the consequences of one's own behaviour.

As public awareness of environmental consequences grows, methods like carbon and water footprinting are increasingly used to express social and environmental responsibility ([34]). The carbon footprint for calculating the impact of tourism

Fig. 1.1 The reception area of a small hotel in the Amazon reflects the cultural specificities of the region—the physical and spiritual connection to luxuriant vegetation, the love of colour and the creativity unbridled by the aesthetic norms of the Western world (Napo Sumaco aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark, Ecuador). Photo: M. Pásková, 2022

investments was described by Cadarso et al. [35]). Resource consumption by tourism was discussed by Munday, Turner and Jones [36]. Gössling and Buckley [37] also addressed the limits in the functioning of carbon footprint-based eco-labelling, which has so far been plagued by ineffective communication with actual and potential customers.

Personal or group social responsibility can also rely on a more intricate measure called the ecological footprint, which gauges the overall impact of a specific activity on the Earth ([38]). Kettl [39] applied an ecological footprint-based method to compare the environmental impacts of different transportation modes. Additionally, Marzouki, Froger and Ballet [40] conducted a comparison of the environmental impacts of ecotourism and mass tourism using ecological footprint analysis. Michailidou et al. [41] utilised a combination of ecological footprint analysis and life cycle assessment methods to analyse the impact of tourism on the Greek peninsula of Chalkidiki. Sun [42] analysed the impacts of tourism infrastructure, transportation of tourists by aircraft and importation of supplies for visitors to small islands using the ecological footprint. Various types of footprints, including environmental, social, economic, combined and composite, are utilised based on the fundamental dimensions of sustainability ([43]), with methods provided for their calculation.

Agenda 21 can be regarded as a significant declaration of humanity's responsibility towards nature and the advancement of our species. It acknowledges our capacity for progress as well as our potential to cause harm or protect the environment to ensure the survival of all plant and animal species. Agreed upon at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Agenda 21 laid out the theoretical definition and declaration of sustainable development and gradually put into practice using methodologies such as those developed by UN WTO [44], UNEP [45], Vourc'h, Denman [46] as well as tourism policies at different geographical levels of tourism development and through tourism policies at various geographical levels of development.

The general concept of social responsibility is also expanding in terms of quality, content and understanding of interrelationships in several different directions—in terms of its content, geographical scope and whether there is only one entity claiming social responsibility, or a concerted involvement of various entities, individuals and administrations at the local, regional or global level. This broadening of the concept of social responsibility geographically, in terms of content, system and in terms of cooperation, as well as the degree of involvement of other tourism stakeholders and actors, is illustrated clearly in Fig. 1.2.

In addition to research, declaration and implementation of social responsibility in large organisations, there is a growing focus on social responsibility of:

- **Small and medium-sized businesses**—for firms in the tourism industry, see, e.g. Tamajón and Font [11], examples from other sectors are exemplified by Koubská and Hralová [47].
- **Individuals**—visitor responsibility in community tourism is discussed by Sin and Minca [48].
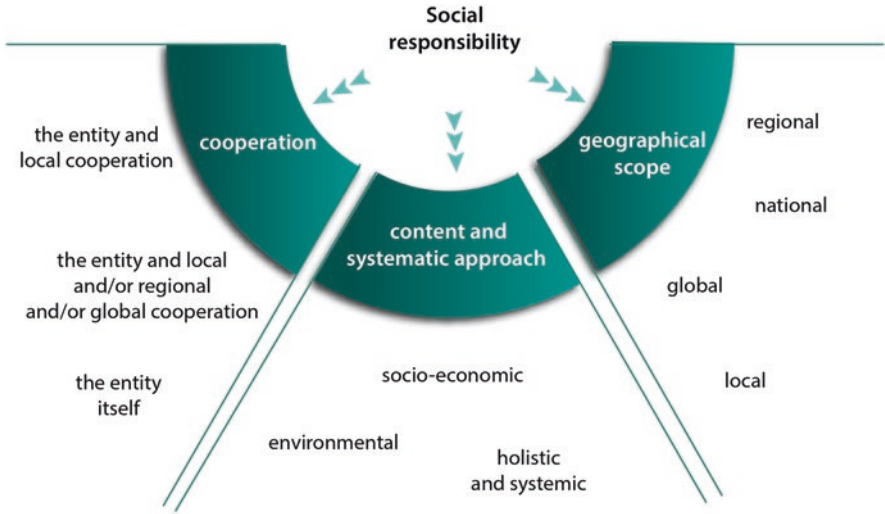
Fig. 1.2 Expanding the concept of social responsibility in three different contexts—geographical, content, systematic and cooperative

Fig. 1.3 The interplay between the concept of sustainable tourism, which addresses the impacts of tourism, and the concept of social responsibility in tourism, which addresses the attitudes and behaviour of tourism actors

- **Local community**—Su, Wang and Wen [49] present local community approaches to tourism development.
- **Other tourism actors and stakeholders**.

Simply put, the concept of sustainability in tourism focuses on the effects of tourism, their optimisation and the appropriate procedures for achieving this optimisation, whilst the concept of social responsibility focuses on the approach of individual tourism actors and tourism organisations to its implementation (Fig. 1.3). Thus,

social responsibility in tourism includes the approaches of individual tourism actors and tourism organisations means not only to prevent unsustainable tourism impacts, but also to realise positive externalities. Socially, environmentally and economically responsible development of tourism constitutes the content of the concept of sustainable development of tourism, as discussed in Chap. 2.

The following chapters offer answers to the following questions in the context of sustainable development and social responsibility in tourism:

- What is social responsibility in tourism, and how is it changing over time (see, in particular, Sects. 3.1 and 3.2)?
- What motivates different people in the tourism industry to adopt social responsibility or take part in it?
- Why the current mode and intensity of tourism is no longer sustainable?
- What does sustainable tourism mean, and how does it relate to social responsibility (see, in particular, Chap. 2)?
- What makes social responsibility in tourism unique?
- How do declarations, charters, codes of ethics and international standards play a role in social responsibility in tourism (see, in particular, Sects. 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8)?
- How can we see social responsibility in the actions of tourism service providers, destination managers, tourists, and others involved in tourism?
- Which types of tourism are currently most relevant for applying the concept of social responsibility (see Chap. 6)?

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