GOVERNING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSIBILITY IN TOURISM REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mirjam Dibra *, Enida Pulaj Brakaj **, Nevila Cinaj ***, Ermira Qosja ****, Ani Mbrica *****

* Tourism Department, Faculty of Economics, University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkodra, Albania
** *Corresponding author*, Business Department, Faculty of Economics, University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora, Albania
Contact details: Business Department, Faculty of Economics, University "Ismail Qemali", L. Pavaresia, Rr. Kosova, 9402 Vlora, Albania
*** Tourism Department, Faculty of Business, "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durrës, Albania
**** Management Department, Faculty of Business, "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durrës, Albania
***** Department of Business and Finance, Faculty of Business and Law, Tirana Business University College, Tirana, Albania

Abstract

Tourism expansion presents development opportunities but also challenges requiring long-term planning and stakeholders' collaboration. Many destinations face difficulties in translating sustainability principles into tourist satisfaction improvements (Yen et al., 2024) due to limited stakeholder engagement, inadequate long-term planning, and weak integration of local economic development into tourism policies (Coccossis & Koutsopoulou, 2020). Although responsible tourism is important, its mediating role between sustainability practices and tourist experiences remains underexplored, particularly from local stakeholders' perspectives (Spadaro et al., 2023; Cheer et al., 2021). This study examines how stakeholder-driven sustainability initiatives enhance tourist satisfaction and how responsible tourism impacts sustainable development strategies with positive tourism outcomes along Albania's Adriatic coast. Data from 185 stakeholders were used to assess the impact of sustainability factors on tourist satisfaction and the mediating role of responsible tourism in destination development. Findings reveal that long-term planning has the most substantial direct effect on tourist satisfaction, followed by local economic development and stakeholder participation. Furthermore, mediation analysis shows that responsible tourism initiatives in terms of local employment, cultural heritage preservation, and community-based service provision mediate the relationship between sustainability and tourist satisfaction. These results highlight the importance of integrating responsible tourism into sustainable destination management to enhance tourist experiences.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Responsible Tourism, Stakeholders, Tourist Satisfaction, Coastal Area, Adriatic

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, despite facing occasional shocks, has proven to be one of the most dynamic and vital sectors of the global economy over the years (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2021, 2025). Even after the COVID-19 pandemic caused major problems, tourism has shown that it can bounce back quickly. The year 2024 was a historic year for the industry as it regained its position as a key driver of socio-economic development and a catalyst for sustainable growth (UNWTO, 2025; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2025). The growth of tourism's contribution to the world's economy is expected to continue throughout 2025, driven by strong international demand projected to increase by 3–5% compared to 2024 (UNWTO, 2025). This notable surge in tourism highlights the critical responsibility of all stakeholders: to prioritise ecosystem health, enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations, and improve the quality of life for host communities. This appeal is even more sensitive in coastal countries due to the fact that coasts are considered among the most attractive tourist destinations in the world (Er-Ramy et al., 2023). Furthermore, these areas have complex socio-economic and environmental systems where tourism is strongly linked to the environment and the livelihoods of the host communities. Research widely recognises that stakeholders, including public authorities, local communities, tourism businesses, educational institutions, and environmental organisations, are key actors in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes (Damian et al., 2022; Mohamadi et al., 2022; Cheer et al., 2021). Their collective engagement, shared responsibility, and coordinated actions are instrumental in shaping the trajectory of sustainable tourism development (Schönherr, 2023). Therefore, understanding and taking into account the perspectives of stakeholders is crucial to the outcomes of responsible tourism for sustainable tourism destinations (Baloch et al., 2022). Additionally, tourism host actors strive to express their opinions in tourism development and management policies, as these policies significantly impact them. Effective stakeholder commitment in tourism destination decision-making is crucial for managing delicate environments, as it promotes a sense of place and shared responsibility for preserving natural and cultural resources. It also enhances environmental attractiveness and ensures the long-term sustainability of tourism activities (Hilario et al., 2024; Kularadhan et al., 2024). Equally important for the sustainability of a tourist destination is ensuring that tourism revenues remain within the local host community. When the destination economy is community-based, relying primarily on local tourism enterprises, local entrepreneurship within the supply chain, and skilled local staff, tourism income can directly contribute to local development (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). Local ownership strengthens community identity and fosters stakeholder collaboration, highlighting the critical role of community empowerment and engagement in achieving destination success.

Responsible tourism is a new approach in the discourse of sustainable tourism development.

In contexts of transformative change, adopting holistic and integrative approaches is strongly recommended (Mathew et al., 2024). This study acknowledges that the responsible management of coastal and marine ecosystems for sustainable tourism development requires collaborative governance that integrates long-term planning, community participation, and local economic empowerment. Such a holistic approach not only supports the preservation of the environmental and cultural assets that attract tourists but also fosters stakeholder accountability for destination sustainability. However, many coastal areas still experience fragmented development, top-down planning, and limited local engagement, which undermine tourism quality and long-term sustainability (Mejjad et al., 2022).

This study addresses this gap by investigating how long-term planning, inclusive governance, and community-based economic approaches influence tourist satisfaction and how responsible tourism mediates the relationship between sustainable tourism variables and tourists' satisfaction at the destination. The research focuses on a part of the Mediterranean basin, exclusively in the Adriatic coastal area of Albania, which is an ever-growing tourism destination due to its diversity of natural landscapes, wealth of cultural assets, and strategic geographical position.

Although Albania's political discourse promotes sustainable tourism, the development of mass tourism in this coastal zone has often followed unsustainable practices. These considerations highlight the need for responsible tourism development that aligns tourism growth with ecological protection and local empowerment, while sustaining the destination's competitive advantage. To address this, it is essential to understand how long-term planning, community participation in tourism policy decision-making, and community-based economic models shape stakeholder attitudes and responsibilities toward tourism development, and how these, in turn, influence tourist satisfaction within the specific geographical and socio-ecological context of the Albanian Adriatic coastal zone.

While the concept of stakeholder responsibility in tourism has received growing attention in recent literature, its empirical testing in Albania, particularly within the context of long-term planning, local governance, and community-based economic development, remains limited. Accordingly, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To assess the impact of stakeholder involvement, long-term tourism planning, and local economic development on tourist satisfaction along Albania's Adriatic coast.
- To assess how long-term planning, stakeholders' participation in tourism decision-making and development, and local economic growth foster responsibility among tourism stakeholders on the Adriatic coast of Albania.
- To examine whether stakeholders' responsibility practices mediate the relationship between sustainable governance practices and tourist satisfaction on the Albanian Adriatic coast, from the perspective of local stakeholders.

The research contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on responsible coastal tourism by positioning the Albanian Adriatic coast

within the wider Mediterranean sustainability debates. It advances the literature on sustainable and responsible tourism through empirical analysis of these dynamics in a rapidly developing Adriatic context.

The rest of the paper is structured in several sections. Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework of the study and provides a concise overview of the role of long-term planning, stakeholder participation in tourism decision-making, and community-based economic development in enhancing tourist satisfaction. Section 3 describes the research methodology, detailing the data collection and analysis procedures and focusing on various dimensions of sustainable and responsible tourism. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 discusses the findings in light of the existing literature. Section 6 concludes the paper by summarizing the main results and outlining their implications for sustainable tourism developments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Linking long-term planning of tourist destinations with tourist satisfaction

Long-term planning in coastal tourist destinations plays a key role in shaping tourist satisfaction, as it directly influences the quality of the physical environment, the provision of accommodation services, and the accessibility of the destination. Academic literature consistently highlights the connection between proactive strategic planning approaches and the improvement of tourist experiences in coastal destinations (Ortiz et al., 2024). Studies indicate that in coastal tourist destinations, aligning infrastructure, tourism superstructure, and environmental conditions with evolving tourist expectations while protecting environmental assets requires strategic planning mechanisms (Marzuki et al., 2024), including: 1) Implementation of development standards for new tourism structures that integrate physical and operational parameters with quality criteria (Simancas Cruz et al., 2018); 2) Tourist destination zoning that accounts for environmental sensitivity, market potential, and infrastructure availability, aiming to balance conservation with development (Pratama et al., 2025); 3) Integrated coastal zone management as a key tool for sustainable planning of tourism-appropriate areas, preserving the natural attractiveness of coastal landscapes and protecting ecosystems to attract both tourists and investors (Satiroğlu, 2024); 4) Marine spatial planning to conserve marine and coastal landscapes critical to tourism and to foster synergies between coastal and marine tourism and other human uses (Rafael et al., 2024). In addition, assessing and analysing a destination's carrying capacity is recognized as a valuable policy tool within integrated management frameworks, enabling data-driven decision-making that promotes responsible tourism while preserving the key elements of destination attractiveness and ensuring the continuity of tourism activities (Xu & Li, 2025). As well, the local-level adaptation of the European tourism indicator system (ETIS) functions as a strategic planning mechanism for coastal tourist destinations, aiming to monitor sustainability performance and guide the design of data-based

development policies (Font et al., 2021) that enhance both the quality and competitiveness of coastal tourism in accordance with sustainability principles (Coccossis & Koutsopoulou, 2020).

Together, these studies conclude that through the proactive management of both natural and built environments, coastal destinations can not only enhance the quality of tourist experiences but also strengthen their resilience and competitive positioning in the face of growing tourism pressures (Karsokiene et al., 2025). Accordingly, the literature consistently affirms that strategic, integrated, and sustainable planning is essential for ensuring the long-term success and continued attractiveness of seaside destinations. Based on this line of reasoning, the raised hypothesis consists:

H1: Long-term planning has a positive and significant effect on ensuring tourist satisfaction.

2.2. Linking stakeholder participation in tourism decision-making and tourist satisfaction

The effective participation of stakeholders in tourism decision-making is widely recognised in the literature as a crucial determinant of tourist satisfaction. When local communities, government bodies, tourism businesses, and related sectors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and academic institutions are actively involved in the planning and management of coastal destinations, it becomes possible to maintain a balance between the exploitation and conservation of natural resources. This ensures that all stakeholders benefit sustainably from coastal tourism and that tourism policies and products are better aligned with tourists' expectations. As a result, tourist satisfaction rises, supporting the development of the destination as a sustainable tourism hub (Mahrudin et al., 2025). Consequently, tourist satisfaction increases, contributing to the development of the destination as a sustainable tourism hub. Continuous collaboration between governmental authorities and local stakeholders facilitates the generation of accurate and reliable data, thereby strengthening the planning processes and ensuring the validation of strategies aimed at effective sustainable tourism development (Coccossis & Koutsopoulou, 2020).

Several studies analysing the performance of tourist destinations in the context of sustainable tourism have identified key factors influencing tourist satisfaction. In ecologically sensitive coastal areas, the availability of tourist facilities and infrastructure significantly impacts tourist satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and the likelihood of repeat visits (Aniramu et al., 2025). In contrast, within island destinations, tourist satisfaction is largely shaped by the availability and quality of activities, as well as the problems perceived by tourists both prior to and following their stay (Kontogeorgis et al., 2025). For this reason, the active involvement of local actors fosters a relationship of co-responsibility, which enhances the quality of the tourist experience. The study by Spadaro et al. (2023) on the integrated action plan for the promotion of sustainable tourism in Genoa, Italy, highlights a participatory planning process involving key tourism stakeholders such as the public sector, private sector, local community, and tourists. According to the authors, this inclusive model not only seeks to enhance local

co-responsibility regarding tourism impacts, but also, through an analysis of beneficiaries' actual needs and emerging tourism trends, contributes to a substantial improvement in the tourism offer and service quality. Furthermore, the proposed planning process demonstrates additional benefits from stakeholder engagement, including a stronger sense of place attachment, increased trust in policymaking, improved planning quality, and the promotion of innovation and sustainability in tourism interventions. These findings provide empirical evidence that stakeholder involvement in the management of coastal destinations is associated with significant improvements in tourist satisfaction, thereby enhancing both quality and sustainability. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Stakeholders' participation has a positive and significant effect on ensuring tourist satisfaction.

2.3. Linking local economic growth to tourist satisfaction

Another important variable within the sustainable tourism framework is local economic development, particularly in terms of local employment, promoting local goods and services, and the overall improvement of the local community. Research studies in coastal destinations show that fostering the local economy positively impacts tourist satisfaction by aligning local livelihoods with tourists' expectations and deepening the authenticity of tourism experiences. In their study, Basile et al. (2021) found that tourism can significantly impact local economies and community well-being (Basile et al., 2021). Local community involvement in tourism can increase tourists' perceptions of authenticity as well as their connection to the place by showing care in preserving local resources. The local population is recognised as a critical factor in facilitating meaningful interactions between tourists and the destination, serving as a key incentive for enhancing tourists' perceptions of authenticity. This, in turn, contributes to increased tourist satisfaction by enabling authentic local experiences (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Huruta et al., 2024). Regarding tourist demand for local gastronomy, another study evaluates three motivational dimensions: physical, cultural, and social that predict satisfaction from local gastronomy at a coastal destination, where the physical motivator is the most important, followed by the social one (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). In addition, a study on the impact of community-based tourism development suggests that its performance has a significant influence on tourists' post-purchase behavioural intentions (Han et al., 2019). Moreover, the relationship between tourism performance and perceived local development is moderated by tourists' sense of belonging to the destination. These research findings collectively argue that local economic development characterised by local ownership and employment, cultural affirmation, locally distinctive products and services, and collaborative governance enhances perceived authenticity, service quality, and tourists' engagement. In this way, tourism destinations not only fulfil tourists' desires for authentic and responsible experiences but also ensure long-term economic sustainability while preserving the physical and cultural environment. Based on this evidence, the third research hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Local economic development has a positive and significant effect on ensuring tourist satisfaction.

2.4. Responsible tourism initiatives

Generally speaking, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism appear to represent similar constructs. However, despite sharing a common goal, the two differ in their scope and emphasis. In the realm of initiatives aimed at enhancing the sustainability of tourism, numerous authors regard responsible tourism as an effective means to attain sustainable development objectives. The literature presents sustainable tourism as an aspirational goal, while responsible tourism serves as its effective implementation, fostering the advancement of sustainable tourism practices (Cheer et al., 2021; Camilleri, 2016). In essence, if sustainability is the ultimate goal of tourism development, responsible tourism serves as the principal pathway to achieving it. It encompasses a set of deliberate actions and practices undertaken by stakeholders to ensure that tourism remains economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable over the long term (Goodwin, 2011). The concept of responsible tourism includes behaviours and practices that minimise negative sociocultural and environmental impacts while maximising benefits for the local host community and the environment by promoting responsibility among all tourism actors (Mihalic, 2016). Starting with the main definitions, sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of current tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for future development (Saarinen, 2021). Meanwhile, responsible tourism is the tourism that creates better places to live and better places to visit by acting responsibly in the way tourism is planned, developed, and experienced (Goodwin, 2011). The concept of responsible tourism and its management practices are equally applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations. Responsible tourism plays a critical role in operationalising sustainable tourism principles by translating broad sustainability goals into concrete, stakeholder-driven actions. Sustainable tourism is regarded as a framework for achieving economic, socio-cultural, and environmental balance in tourism development, whereas responsible tourism emphasizes the accountability of all actors, including governments, businesses, educational institutions, communities, and tourists. In this sense, responsible tourism is not merely complementary to sustainable tourism; it is the practical mechanism through which sustainability is implemented and maintained in tourism systems. In coastal areas, where ecosystems are sensitive and protecting beaches is more than an obligation, tourists, stakeholders, and authorities must be responsibly engaged in preserving habitat and correcting destructive behaviours. By emphasizing responsibility, it serves as a vital tool for all stakeholders' attitudes towards fostering a tourism industry that truly supports sustainability (Mathew et al., 2024). To elaborate mediating role of responsible tourism, this hypothesis has been divided into three sub-hypotheses as follows:

H4a: Responsible tourism mediates the relationship between stakeholder participation and ensuring tourist satisfaction.

H4b: Responsible tourism mediates the relationship between long-term planning and ensuring tourist satisfaction.

H4c: Responsible tourism mediates the relationship between local economic development and ensuring tourist satisfaction.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section details the methodological approach adopted in the study, including the data collection process, sampling strategy, instrument design, and the procedures used for testing validity, reliability, and mediation analysis. The study aims to examine how tourist satisfaction is influenced by stakeholders' participation, long-term planning processes, and local economic development, and to explore the mediating role of responsible tourism in this relationship. The conceptual framework is grounded in the sustainable tourism attitude scale (SUS-TAS), which provides a structured basis for evaluating stakeholders' perceptions and sustainable tourism dynamics. The sample consisted of 185 stakeholders along the Adriatic seaside from the coastal regions of Vlora, Durres, and Shkodra, respectively, 32.1%, 31.7%, and 36.2%. A non-probability sampling method was employed to select participants from the private sector, while a purposive sampling approach was applied to target key actors from local and central public institutions, educational institutions, strategic investors, NGOs, and media representatives actively involved in tourism development. Tourist satisfaction data from various stakeholder groups were collected via structured questionnaires between October and December 2024. The questionnaire comprised items adapted from validated scales, including SUS-TAS, which is a psychometric scale used to measure stakeholders' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development in their local area. The scale was developed by Choi and Sirakaya (2005) and is widely used in tourism research to measure constructs such as stakeholders' participation, long-term planning, local economic development,

perception of responsible tourism initiatives, and tourists' satisfaction in the destination from the stakeholders' perspective. The questionnaire instrument included variables such as stakeholder participation in tourism decision-making, long-term planning, and local economic growth, drawing on the frameworks established by Sirakaya-Turk and Gursoy (2013) and Tosun (2006). Additionally, responsible tourism practices were assessed based on the contributions of Swarbrooke (1999), Goodwin (2016), Camilleri (2016), Cheer et al. (2021), and Mathew et al. (2024), while tourist satisfaction at the destination was evaluated following the methodology proposed by Jeelani et al. (2022). Each construct was operationalised using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to conduct reliability testing and descriptive statistical analysis, providing an initial understanding of the sample characteristics and variable distributions. While structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied for the evaluation of the measurement and structural models, it allowed for the assessment of latent constructs and the testing of hypothesized relationships among variables. Although this study employed a quantitative approach using SEM to examine the relationships among sustainable tourism variables, responsible tourism practices, and tourist satisfaction, other alternative methodologies could also be suitable for this research. A qualitative approach, such as semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions, could provide deeper insights into stakeholders' perceptions and contextual nuances of responsible tourism. Alternatively, a mixed-methods design could integrate quantitative modelling with qualitative inquiry, enhancing both the robustness and interpretive depth of the findings. The choice of SEM in this study was therefore justified by its ability to simultaneously assess measurement validity and structural relationships within an integrated analytical framework.

The conceptual model, developed on the basis of the proposed hypotheses, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research
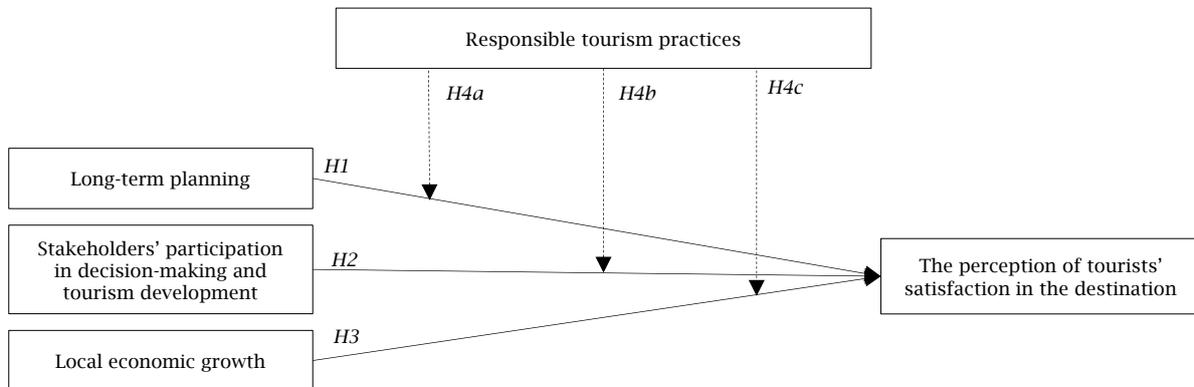
Source: Authors' elaboration.

The questionnaire was evaluated for reliability and validity, as summarized in Table 1. All constructs exhibited Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating

strong internal consistency. Composite reliability (CR) values also exceeded 0.70 for all constructs, further confirming the reliability of the measurement scales. Convergent validity was

assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), with a threshold of 0.50. All constructs demonstrated AVE values above this benchmark, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Specifically, *stakeholders' participation* ($\alpha = 0.778$), *long-term planning* ($\alpha = 0.949$), *local economic growth* ($\alpha = 0.852$), and *responsible tourism* ($\alpha = 0.912$) demonstrated high internal consistency. CR values ranged from 0.777 to 0.961, confirming the robustness of the constructs. AVE values were 0.709 for *stakeholders' participation*, 0.804 for *long-term planning*, 0.669 for *local economic growth*, and 0.628 for *responsible tourism*, all exceeding the recommended threshold. According to Hair et al. (2017), AVE values above 0.50 are considered sufficient to establish construct validity in structural equation modelling.

Table 1. Reliability and validity test results

Variable constructs	Cronbach alpha	CR	KMO	AVE
Stakeholders' participation	0.778	0.870	0.746	0.709
Long-term planning	0.949	0.961	0.902	0.804
Local economic growth	0.852	0.777	0.805	0.669
Responsible tourism	0.912	0.931	0.862	0.628

Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs.

4. RESULTS

The results of the study are organised based on three main variables: sustainable tourism factors, including *stakeholders' participation*, *long-term planning*, *local economic growth*, attitudes toward *responsible tourism*, and tourist satisfaction from the perspective of local stakeholders. To examine the relationship between sustainable tourism and tourist satisfaction, multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of sustainable tourism variables on stakeholders' perceptions of tourist satisfaction. All variables showing a statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) were included in the regression model. Prior to interpreting the significance of each independent variable, a model summary (Table 2) was evaluated to assess the overall relationships among the variables. The regression model yielded an R value of 0.736 and an R² value of 0.542, indicating that the independent variables collectively explain approximately 54.2% of the variance in sustainable tourism outcomes. The F-statistic value confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. These results indicate a strong relationship between the independent variables and sustainable tourism development.

Table 2. Model summary

Model	R	R²	Std. error of the estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.736[a]	0.542	0.395	71.763	0.000[b]

Note: a. Predictors: Constant, stakeholders' participation, long-term planning, local economic growth; b. Dependent variable: Tourists' satisfaction.

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the results of the multiple regression analysis, highlighting the relationships between sustainable tourism predictors and the dependent variable, which represents tourists' satisfaction at the destination as perceived by local stakeholders.

Table 3. Sustainable tourism practices and their impact on tourists' satisfaction in the destination

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	0.881	0.236		3.730	0.000
Long-term planning	0.532	0.058	0.557	9.151	0.000
Local economic growth	0.150	0.054	0.167	2.782	0.006
Stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and tourism development	0.099	0.041	0.140	2.395	0.018

Note: Dependent variable: Tourists' satisfaction with the destination.

Tourist satisfaction variance was significantly explained by all variables in the regression model, with p-values below the standard α level of 0.05. Long-term planning emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.557$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the substantial influence of strategic, future-oriented tourism development on tourists' perceptions. Local economic growth also had a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.167$, $p = 0.006$), suggesting that economic benefits experienced or perceived in the local community enhance tourist satisfaction. Stakeholders' participation in decision-making and tourism management showed a smaller but significant effect ($\beta = 0.140$, $p = 0.018$), emphasizing the value of inclusive governance in tourism development, albeit with less relative impact. These findings empirically support the proposition that integrated, participatory tourism planning, characterized by long-term strategic vision, community economic engagement, and stakeholder inclusion, positively contributes to enhanced tourist satisfaction.

Another hypothesis explored in this study concerns the mediating role of the responsible tourism practices and their impact on the relationship between sustainable tourism variables and the perception of tourists' satisfaction in the destination. The assumption is that the effectiveness of sustainable tourism variables in enhancing tourists' satisfaction is significantly reinforced by the presence of responsible tourism initiatives. Within the framework of sustainable tourism development, it is proposed that the positive impacts of sustainable dimensions related to long-term planning, local economic growth, and stakeholders' participation on tourist satisfaction depend on the extent to which responsible tourism practices are integrated into destination management. In this context, responsible

tourism serves as a moderating mechanism that strengthens the relationship between sustainability initiatives and perceived tourist satisfaction outcomes.

According to Hair et al. (2017), mediation occurs when a third variable influences the relationship between two related variables. To assess the mediating effect of responsible tourism practices on the link between sustainable tourism and tourists' satisfaction perceptions, this study applies the four conditions specified by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, there must be a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables before introducing the mediator variable into the model. As we found in the previous hypothesis verification, the results show high values of R and R² values, 0.736 and 0.542, respectively; the F value is $71.763 > F$ (3, 182); sig. is 0.000 < 0.0505; and the direct path results present a significantly positive relationship between the variables. Second, there should be a significant relationship between the independent variables of the sustainable tourism construct: stakeholders' participation, long-term planning, local economic growth, and the mediator variable (responsible tourism initiatives). Regression was performed to forecast the mediating variable using the independent variables related to sustainable tourism practices. The model's output results show that the R and R² values are 0.574 and 0.318, and the F value is $31.148 > F$ (3, 182) = 2.65, sig. 0.000 < 0.05. The direct path results reveal a statistically significant relationship between the two groups of variables, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Sustainable tourism variables and their impact on responsible tourism initiatives

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	1.043	0.329		3.173	0.002
Long-term planning	0.352	0.080	0.325	4.420	0.000
Local economic growth	0.169	0.074	0.186	2.278	0.024
Stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and tourism development	0.185	0.058	0.220	3.202	0.002

Note: Dependent variable: Responsible tourism initiatives.

The third condition examines the significance of the relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable. To assess this, the direct path between responsible tourism initiatives (as the mediator) and tourist satisfaction at the destination was tested. The results indicate a statistically significant and positive relationship between the two variables. Specifically, the model produced an R value of 0.487 and an R² of 0.237, suggesting that approximately 24% of the variance in tourist satisfaction is explained by responsible tourism initiatives. The analysis also resulted in a significant F-statistic of 56.780, $p < 0.001$, and the path coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.487$, t = 7.535, $p < 0.001$), confirming the strength of the direct association. Once the significance of both the direct and indirect effects has been established, the final step involves evaluating the strength of the mediating construct. Finally, the last condition in testing the mediating effect is to examine whether, after controlling for both the independent and mediator variables, the previously observed significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables becomes non-significant or shows a substantial reduction in significance. The model was tested, and the values of the sustainable tourism variables with the mediating effect of responsible tourism initiatives resulted as follows:

Table 5. Structural model results (direct, indirect, and total effects)

Effect	On	Direct effects[a]	t	Indirect effects[b]	Direct effects[b]	Total effects (direct + indirect effect)	Result
Stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and tourism development	Tourists' satisfaction with the destination	0.140**	2.395	0.107**	0.033**	0.247**	Supported
Stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and tourism development	Responsible tourism initiatives	0.220**	3.202				
Long-term planning	Tourists' satisfaction with the destination	0.557**	9.151	0.158**	0.399**	0.715**	Supported
Long-term planning	Responsible tourism initiatives	0.325**	4.420				
Local economic growth	Tourists' satisfaction with the destination	0.167**	2.782	0.091**	0.076**	0.258**	Supported
Local economic growth	Responsible tourism initiatives	0.186	5.762				
Responsible tourism initiatives	Tourists' satisfaction with the destination	0.487**	7.535				Supported

*Note: ** $p < 0.05$; a. Without a mediator variable; b. With a mediator variable.*

As demonstrated by the mediation model, there is a significant positive relationship between sustainable tourism practices and responsible tourism initiatives. The relationship between stakeholders' participation and tourists' satisfaction shows partial mediation. This is evidenced by a reduction in the direct effect from 0.140 to 0.033 after including the mediator variable (responsible tourism initiatives). Both the direct and indirect effects are statistically significant.

Similarly, the relationship between long-term planning and tourists' satisfaction also demonstrates partial mediation. The direct effect decreases from 0.557 to 0.399, also remains statistically significant. The indirect effect (0.158) is likewise significant. A comparable pattern is observed in the relationship between local economic growth and tourists' satisfaction, where the direct effect decreases from 0.167 to 0.076, and the indirect effect is 0.091. These results indicate that responsible tourism initiatives partially mediate the relationships between the independent variables (sustainable tourism) and tourists' satisfaction at the destination. All direct and indirect effects are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, underscoring the robustness of the mediation effects. Consequently, responsible tourism initiatives can be considered a mechanism linking key strategic factors such as stakeholder participation in decision-making and tourism development, long-term planning, and local economic growth to stakeholders' perception of tourists' satisfaction in the destination. This finding suggests that strengthening responsible tourism initiatives can enhance the positive impact of tourism planning strategies on tourists' satisfaction.

Based on the findings of Hair et al. (2017), the direct effect of the independent variables related to sustainability on tourism satisfaction was absorbed by a significant indirect influence. The strength of the mediation effect was evaluated using the variance accounted for (VAF), which is calculated as the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect. The mediating effect of responsible tourism initiatives on the relationship between sustainable tourism and tourists' satisfaction accounted for VAF values of 0.43 (0.107 / 0.247), 0.22 (0.158 / 0.715), and 0.35 (0.091 / 0.258) for stakeholder participation, long-term planning, and local economic growth, respectively. These results indicate that stakeholder participation, long-term planning, and local economic growth contribute 43%, 22%, and 35%, respectively, of the variance in tourists' satisfaction through the mediating role of responsible tourism initiatives. Accordingly, since the VAF values fall within the range of 20% to 80%, this supports the presence of partial mediation (Hair et al., 2017).

5. DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the growing literature on sustainable tourism by empirically examining the impact of key sustainability-related factors, such as long-term planning, local economic growth, and stakeholder participation, on tourism decision-making and development processes and tourists' satisfaction at the destination. The stakeholders' perspectives on the mediation role of the responsible tourism initiatives are evaluated through the examination of factors such as the stakeholders' responsibility to protect and respect local culture and the environment, to comply with destination management regulations, to minimise the use of unique local resources, to ensure services that are provided and managed by the local community, and to develop the local community economically because it is important for the functioning of the tourist destination.

Through multiple regression analysis and using a mediation effect model, the hypotheses were tested to explain the role of tourism sustainability-related variables mediated by the responsible tourism initiatives on the tourists' satisfaction in the destination. The results strongly support the proposed relationships and show how responsible tourism initiatives can help make these connections stronger.

The results from the multiple regression analysis underscore that long-term planning exerts the strongest direct influence on tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.557$, $p < 0.001$). This finding aligns with the theoretical perspectives in sustainable tourism frameworks (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020), which highlight the importance of strategic, future-oriented planning in shaping positive tourist experiences. Long-term planning initiatives ensure that tourism development is both sustainable and aligned with destination management goals, thereby enhancing the overall satisfaction of tourists visiting the area.

Local economic growth also demonstrated a significant positive impact on tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.167$, $p = 0.006$). This result reinforces the notion that economic benefits perceived at the community level, such as employment opportunities, improved infrastructure, and increased local income, are integral to enhancing the tourism experience. Tourists may perceive economic growth as a sign of a vibrant and welcoming destination, which translates into higher satisfaction levels (Purnomo & Khairunnisa, 2024).

Furthermore, stakeholder participation in decision-making processes and tourism development also exhibited a statistically significant, albeit smaller, effect on tourists' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.140$, $p = 0.018$); this remains a vital component of sustainable tourism. This finding confirms that inclusive governance mechanisms play an important role in shaping positive tourist perceptions by fostering community ownership and ensuring that tourism policies reflect diverse stakeholder interests. While the effect size is comparatively smaller than for long-term planning and local economic growth, it nonetheless underscores the value of participatory approaches in destination management (Byrd, 2007). Engaging stakeholders ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes, leading to more inclusive and resilient tourism strategies. Recent literature supports the notion that stakeholder engagement enhances the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

The mediation analysis revealed that responsible tourism initiatives partially mediate the relationships between sustainable tourism

variables and tourists' satisfaction. Specifically, the VAF values for stakeholder participation (0.43), long-term planning (0.22), and local economic growth (0.35) fell within the recommended range (20%–80%), indicating partial mediation (Hair et al., 2017). This finding highlights the crucial role of responsible tourism initiatives, such as protecting local culture and the environment, adhering to destination management regulations, and promoting community-based tourism services, in reinforcing the positive effects of sustainable tourism practices on tourists' satisfaction.

Importantly, the results indicate that even after controlling for the mediator variable, the direct effects of the independent variables remained significant, further supporting the notion of partial mediation. This suggests that while responsible tourism initiatives amplify the positive impact of sustainable tourism practices on tourists' satisfaction, they do not fully absorb the influence of the independent variables. These results align with the propositions of integrated sustainable tourism frameworks that emphasize the synergy between economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions (Jannat et al., 2025).

The study demonstrates that the integration of responsible tourism initiatives into destination management strategies can significantly enhance the positive outcomes of sustainable tourism practices, leading to higher levels of tourist satisfaction. This finding has important practical implications for policymakers and destination managers, highlighting the need to prioritize responsible tourism initiatives alongside strategic long-term planning, economic development, and stakeholder engagement to create more satisfying and sustainable tourism experiences.

6. CONCLUSION

Every country faces significant challenges in navigating the complex path toward sustainable tourism development. Ensuring tourist satisfaction at the destination level requires a comprehensive, regulated, and inclusive approach to sustainable tourism development, where stakeholder engagement, long-term planning, and local economic development function as core pillars. Active participation by stakeholders, including community members, businesses, public institutions, environmental agencies, educational institutions, media, and NGOs, ensures that tourism aligns with local values and needs.

Long-term planning plays an important role in sustaining the attractiveness of a destination while mitigating the risks associated with seasonality, overtourism, environmental degradation, and poor resource management. Strategic foresight enables the development of resilient infrastructure, the preservation of environmental and cultural heritage, and contributes to a tourism experience that is not only enjoyable but also ethically and ecologically responsible. Furthermore, local economic development creates a supportive context in which local communities can directly benefit from tourism. Economic incentives motivate local stakeholders to invest in high-quality services and hospitality, reinforcing tourism's value as a collaborative and inclusive community endeavour.

Crucially, responsible tourism serves as a mediating mechanism that translates these sustainable efforts into meaningful outcomes for tourists. By acting as a bridge between sustainability principles and tourist expectations, responsible tourism enhances destination image and fosters long-term success. Destinations that successfully embed responsible tourism within their sustainability strategies are better positioned to achieve higher levels of tourist satisfaction, while simultaneously advancing broader socio-economic and environmental goals.

This study underscores the need for integrative strategies that holistically address sustainability, local empowerment, and tourist-centric planning. Such approaches not only support the regulation and resilience of tourism destinations from stakeholders' perspectives but also contribute meaningfully to regional sustainable development.

Like any empirical research, this study has its own limitations. First, the data were collected using a structured questionnaire targeting stakeholders from selected destinations along the Adriatic seaside, including Vlora, Durres, and Shkodra. The quantitative data collection strategy aimed to ensure a large and representative sample size. However, this approach limited the depth of insights into stakeholders' perspectives. This could be an incentive for future research to address this limitation by incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to complement the quantitative data. Additionally, a qualitative study comparing opinions and perspectives among different stakeholder groups could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Another limitation is that the findings of this study are geographically limited to a specific area in Albania, along the Adriatic Sea. This limitation underscores the need for future research to expand the investigation to other tourism destinations across the country, enabling a comparative analysis between different typologies of the Albanian coastline. Despite these limitations, this study makes several noteworthy contributions to the literature on sustainable tourism development. This research aims to contribute to both theoretical and practical discussions on responsible coastal tourism by situating the Albanian Adriatic coast within the broader debates on Mediterranean sustainability. By linking sustainability theory with measurable tourist outcomes, this paper contributes a framework for advancing responsible and resilient tourism research. The findings are expected to inform policymakers, planners, and local tourism operators about the strategic importance of inclusive governance, long-term planning, and a local growth potential that promotes high-quality tourism experiences. They also reinforce the critical role of local stakeholders in promoting responsible practices and advancing sustainable development along Albania's Adriatic coast.

It empirically demonstrates the mediating role of responsible tourism initiatives in the relationship between key sustainable tourism practices: stakeholder participation, long-term planning, and local economic growth, and tourists' satisfaction. The study underscores the importance of adopting an integrated approach to destination management, highlighting how stakeholders' participation, strategic planning, and economic engagement

collectively enhance tourist experiences in a sustainable and responsible manner. This contribution is particularly needed in the context of the evolving challenges and opportunities confronting tourism destinations in the post-pandemic era, where resilience, community involvement, and sustainable practices are increasingly recognised as critical drivers of destination competitiveness (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

REFERENCES

Alberti, F. G., & Giusti, J. D. (2012). Cultural heritage, tourism and regional competitiveness: The motor valley cluster. *City, Culture and Society, 3*(4), 261–273. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2012.11.003

Aniramu, T., Aniramu, O., Olawale, J., Okebugwu, J., & Odelola, R. (2025). Assessment of sustainable tourism and tourist satisfaction using importance performance analysis and regression method. *Sustainable Environment, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/27658511.2025.2469988

Baloch, Q. B., Shah, S. N., Maher, S., Irshad, M., Khan, A. U., Kiran, S., & Shah, S. S. (2022). Determinants of evolving responsible tourism behavior: Evidences from supply chain. *Cogent Social Sciences, 8*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2099565

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(6), 1173–1182. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173

Basile, G., Tani, M., Sciarelli, M., & Ferri, M. A. (2021). Community participation as a driver of sustainable tourism. The case of an Italian village: Marettimo Island. *Sinergie Italian Journal of Management, 39*(1), 81–102. https://doi.org/10.7433/s114.2021.06

Byrd, E. T. (2007). Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: Applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Review, 62*(2), 6–13. https://doi.org/10.1108/16605370780000309

Camilleri, M. A. (2016). Responsible tourism that creates shared value among stakeholders. *Tourism Planning & Development, 13*(2), 219–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1074100

Carvache-Franco, M., Orden-Mejía, M., Carvache-Franco, W., del Carmen Lapo, M., & Carvache-Franco, O. (2022). Gastronomy motivations as predictors of satisfaction at coastal destinations. *Sustainability, 14*(18), Article 11437. https://doi.org/10.3390/su141811437

Cheer, J. M., Ting, H., & Leong, C.-M. (2021). Responsible tourism: A new era of responsibility? *Journal of Responsible Tourism Management, 1*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.47263/jrtm.01-01-01

Choi, H.-S. C., & Sirakaya, E. (2005). Measuring residents' attitude toward sustainable tourism: Development of sustainable tourism attitude scale. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*(4), 380–394. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287505274651

Coccossis, H., & Koutsopoulou, A. (2020). Measuring and monitoring sustainability of coastal tourism destinations in the Mediterranean. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal, 68*(4), 482–498. https://doi.org/10.37741/t.68.4.8

Damian, I. M., Navarro, E., & Ruiz, F. (2022). Stakeholders' perception of the sustainability of a tourism destination: A methodological framework to find out relationships and similarity of opinions. *Tourism Review, 77*(2), 515–531. https://doi.org/10.1108/tr-07-2020-0292

Er-Ramy, N., Nachite, D., Anfuso, G., & Azaaouaj, S. (2023). The sector analysis as a coastal management tool for sustainable tourism development on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. *Sustainability, 15*(16), Article 12581. https://doi.org/10.3390/su151612581

Font, X., Torres-Delgado, A., Crabolu, G., Palomo Martinez, J., Kantenbacher, J., & Miller, G. (2021). The impact of sustainable tourism indicators on destination competitiveness: The European tourism indicator system. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 31*(7), 1608–1630. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1910281

Goodwin, H. (2011). *Taking responsibility for tourism: Responsible tourism management.* Goodfellow Publishers.

Goodwin, H. (2016). *Responsible tourism: Using tourism for sustainable development.* Goodfellow Publishers. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.28209974

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Han, H., Eom, T., Al-Ansi, A., Ryu, H. B., & Kim, W. (2019). Community-based tourism as a sustainable direction in destination development: An empirical examination of visitor behaviors. *Sustainability, 11*(10), Article 2864. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11102864

Hilario, M. G., Asia, N. S., Cayabyab, D. M., Mandac, O. J., & Savellano, Q. S. (2024). Stakeholders' engagement in tourism development. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 6*(5). https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i05.29097

Huruta, A. D., Sasongko, G., Wahyudi, Y., Saptuti Sri Kawuryan, I., & Yirong Lu, C. (2024). Sustainability and community-based tourism nexus: A mediation role of consumer satisfaction. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2421418

Jannat, A., Islam, Md. M., & Aruga, K. (2025). Revealing the interrelationship of economic, environmental, and social factors with globalization in G-7 countries tourism growth: A CS-ARDL approach. *Sustainable Futures, 9*, Article 100483. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.100483

Jeelani, P., Shah, S. A., Dar, S. N., & Rashid, H. (2022). Sustainability constructs of mountain tourism development: The evaluation of stakeholders' perception using SUS-TAS. *Environment, Development and Sustainability, 25*, 8299–8317. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-022-02401-8

Karsokiene, R., Giedraitis, A., & Stasys, R. (2025). Visitor perceptions toward sustainable and resilient tourism destination: A quantitative assessment. *Tourism and Hospitality, 6*(1), Article 31. https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp6010031

Kontogeorgis, G., Livas, C., Koutoulas, D., Pappa, E., & Garefalakis, A. (2025). Tourist satisfaction and sustainable tourism governance in Mediterranean Island destinations: The case of Corfu. In S. Ed-Dafali, F. Özsungur, & M. Mohiuddin (Eds.), *Modern corporate governance strategies for sustainable value creation* (pp. 411–430). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6750-6.ch020

Kuladhan, K., Thompson, M., & Prideaux, B. (2024). Achieving social sustainability through long-term destination planning: A theoretical model for coastal destinations threatened by climate change. In J. S. Chen (Ed.), *Advances in hospitality and leisure* (Vol. 20, pp. 3–22). Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/s1745-354220240000020001

Mahrudin, Purwanto, Astuti, R. S., & Dwimawanti, I. H. (2025). Stakeholder collaboration in the development of sustainable marine tourism in Wakatobi Regency, Indonesia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9*(14), 638–651. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.914MG0050

Marzuki, A., Bagheri, M., Ahmad, A., Masron, T., & Akhir, M. F. (2024). Examining transformations in coastal city landscapes: Spatial patch analysis of sustainable tourism — A case study in Pahang, Malaysia. *Landscape and Ecological Engineering, 20*, 513–545. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11355-024-00613-w

Mathew, P. V., Cabral, C., & Mohandas, N. P. (2024). Influence of responsible tourism practices on the destination perceptions of tourists. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 26*(4), Article e2692. https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2692

Mejjad, N., Rossi, A., & Pavel, A. B. (2022). The coastal tourism industry in the Mediterranean: A critical review of the socio-economic and environmental pressures and impacts. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 44*, Article 101007. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.101007

Mihalic, T. (2016). Sustainable-responsible tourism discourse — Towards 'responsustable' tourism. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 111*(Part B), 461–470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.12.062

Mohamadi, S., Abbasi, A., Ranaei Kordshouli, H.-A., & Askarifar, K. (2022). Conceptualizing sustainable-responsible tourism indicators: An interpretive structural modeling approach. *Environment, Development and Sustainability, 24*, 399–425. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-021-01442-9

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2020). *Tourism trends and policies 2020.* https://doi.org/10.1787/6b47b985-en

Ortiz, O., Rusu, C., Rusu, V., Matus, N., & Ito, A. (2024). Tourist eXperience considering cultural factors: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability, 16*(22), Article 10042. https://doi.org/10.3390/su162210042

Pratama, V. D., Dewi, C. S. U., Sukandar, Purwanti, P., Isdianto, A., Lutfi, O. M., & Sunardi. (2025). Sustainable marine tourism planning in South Malang: A feasibility and zoning approach for balanced development. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning, 20*(4), 1515–1523. https://doi.org/10.18280/ijsdp.200414

Purnomo, E. P., & Khairunnisa, T. (2024). Green economy: Increasing economic growth to support sustainable tourism in super priority destinations. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning, 19*(10), 4021–4031. https://doi.org/10.18280/ijsdp.191031

Rafael, T., Cabral, H., Mourato, J., & Ferrão, J. (2024). Marine spatial planning: A systematic literature review on its concepts, approaches, and tools (2004–2020). *Maritime Studies, 23*, Article 6. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-023-00349-7

Saarinen, J. (2021). Is being responsible sustainable in tourism? Connections and critical differences. *Sustainability, 13*(12), Article 6599. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126599

Satiroğlu, E. (2024). Integrated coastal zone management studies in Turkey in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: An evaluation using bibliometric analysis. *Sustainability, 16*(16), Article 7028. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16167028

Schönherr, S. (2023). Tourism actors' responsible behavior: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 48*(4), 671–683. https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480231171330

Simancas Cruz, M., García Cruz, J. I., Greifemberg, C. A., & Peñarrubia Zaragoza, M. P. (2018). Strategies to improve the quality and competitiveness of coastal tourism areas: Applying tourism standards. *Journal of Tourism Analysis, 25*(1), 68–90. https://doi.org/10.1108/jta-02-2018-0007

Sirakaya-Turk, E., & Gursoy, D. (2013). Predictive validity of sustas. *Tourism Analysis, 18*(5), 601–605. https://doi.org/10.3727/108354213x13782245307957

Spadaro, I., Pirlone, F., Bruno, F., Saba, G., Poggio, B., & Bruzzone, S. (2023). Stakeholder participation in planning of a sustainable and competitive tourism destination: The Genoa integrated action plan. *Sustainability, 15*(6), Article 5005. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15065005

Swarbrooke, J. (Ed.). (1999). Towards a new approach to sustainable tourism management. In *Sustainable tourism management* (pp. 41–44). CABI. https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851993140.0041

Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management, 27*(3), 493–504. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.12.004

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). (2010). *Protocol on integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean: Albania.* www.unep.org/unepmap/who-we-are/contracting-parties/iczm-protocol

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2018). *UNWTO tourism highlights: 2018 edition.* https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284419876

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2021). *International tourism highlights, 2020 edition.* https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422456

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2025). *World tourism barometer.* https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). (2025). *Travel & tourism economic impact research (EIR).* https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact

Xu, N., & Li, H. (2025). Towards management of sustainable tourism development in coastal destinations of the Bohai Rim: Insights from a tourism carrying capacity analysis. *Discover Sustainability, 6*, Article 168. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-00951-1

Yen, N. T. H., Quynh, N. T. T., Dinh, T. D., Mai, T. T. H., Duyen, N. T. H., Hong, P. N., & Duc, B. M. (2024). The impact of destination quality and image on tourists' loyalty. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development, 12*(1), Article e2728. https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v12i1.2728

Zambrano-Mieles, J. D., Mieles-Cevallos, D. N., Suntasig-Tuasa, L. J., & Fabiani-Orbea, L. (2025). Challenges and opportunities in local sustainable tourism: A systematic review focusing on community participation and regional development. *Journal of Posthumanism, 5*(1), 1062–1078. https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i1.636