

Sustainable Management of Tourism: Insights From Portugal

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Abstract: The importance of achieving effective sustainability performance in destinations worldwide has long been renowned (Cohen, 2002; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Castellani and Sala, 2010; Franzoni, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). Destination policy makers and planners have been working towards a continual and ongoing transition towards the development of sustainable industries for the past three decades. This has subsequently been influenced through the development, provision and implementation of sustainable tourism plans, policies and strategies at International, European, National and local levels. Such plans and strategies are aimed at promoting balanced development that ensures tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, while at the same time addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). However, sustainability is a transition and learning process (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2006) and managing tourism growth together with addressing the needs of the industry, society and the environment as a whole has become a challenge for policy makers and DMO's alike. Nevertheless, it is incremental that destinations look to develop new ways of planning and seek to achieve new strategic positions to ensure the long-term sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of destinations moving into the future. In Portugal, tourism growth has been exponential with tourist activity accounting for €18.4 billion in tourism revenue and responsible for employing over 416,000 people (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2020). Although, the industry has been impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are positive signs that tourism numbers are beginning to increase once again and are expected to rise to pre-covid figures by the end of 2022, according to the European Commission (Costa, 2021). With this in mind, there is a fundamental need to make sustainability the "new normal" for destinations when planning for and managing tourism in both the short and longer term. Thus, for the purpose of this research, it is essential to understand the various impacts, both positive and negative, that can be generated by tourism activity to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental resource base in order to permit an examination into the current level of sustainable management of tourism in Portugal.

Keywords: tourism, sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism management, new normal, Portugal

The development and expansion of tourism worldwide has highlighted the value of tourism as an economic development tool (Marin, 1992) but also the reputation of tourism to act as social and environmental disrupters to host destinations (Mason, 2021). It is this reputation of tourism that has given rise to the need for effective solutions to maximise the positive outcomes from tourism while minimising the negative impacts that can be caused as a result of such growth (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Hashemkhani Zolfani *et al.*, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). According to the World Tourism Organization (2005), sustainable tourism is "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities". Therefore, tourism planners must act to ensure equal benefits for the industry, visitors, communities and the environment in the development, planning and management of tourism.

Tourism activity has been noted to create irreplaceable impacts on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental resource base of host destinations (Maguire and McLoughlin, 2019). However, these impacts can be considered as either beneficial or harmful for the destination (Mason, 2021). According to UNEP and UNWTO (2005), economic impacts are the impacts destinations look at from a positive perspective given the generation of increased capital and direct employment from tourism (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015) as well as the potential of tourism to alleviate and increase tax revenues. On the other hand, the loss of investment in other sector from leakages and the increase in the cost of living in localities and a dependence on tourist revenues can also be seen a cost of tourism (Mason, 2006). Likewise, tourism can create many social impacts including the revitalisation to customs and traditions and preservation of culture which can strengthen local communities and garner community support and participation for such developments (Buckley, 2012). Yet, it has also been noted to lead to a loss of authenticity and the potential for acculturation, overcrowding, crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour (Maguire and McLoughlin, 2019), which often accentuates differences between social classes

and leads to hostility towards tourists. Accordingly, environmental impacts are those caused by human activity and requiring great amounts of natural resources, a number of authors have discussed how tourism can increase the potential for pollution to air and water systems, increase global warming caused by the emission of gases, lead to excessive consumption of non-renewable natural resources, cause damage to fauna and flora of the destinations and disturb wildlife (Buckley, 2012). Others have stated how tourism leads to generation and accumulation of waste and excessive soil erosion. On the other hand, awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and investment in infrastructure has been known to benefit local populations and generate recognition of the problems caused by the interaction between human activity and the environment (Mason, 2021). These impacts, both positive and negative need to be taken into account by policy makers and planners to better manage the industry.

The greater perception of the impacts caused by tourism activity, as well as its exponential increase over time, has given rise to the need to create sustainable tourism development policies (McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). Thus, organizations must work to achieve effective sustainable performance in destinations (Cohen, 2002; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Castellani and Sala, 2010; Franzoni, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019) in order to achieve sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of this industry in the long-term (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015). Destination policy planners have been working in this direction, seeking to make a gradual transition to a system that allows for a balance between these dimensions (UNWTO, 2005). However, it is essential that new strategies are created and developed (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015), as the present transition and learning process (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2006) for the development of sustainable tourism has become a challenge for all policy makers and DMOs in the field of tourism.

One of the challenges that will be faced by planners and policy makers will be how best to manage the sustainable development and management of the industry moving into the future following the Covid-19 pandemic. Although, it has been recognised that tourism is expected to boom once again. Many studies are attempting to understand further how destinations can better prepare the industry moving forward but more attention however is needed on the practical application of sustainability measures. In light of the European Union goal to "promote sustainable tourism and stimulate the competitiveness of the tourism sector in the European market" (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015), destinations need to take action to ensure a responsibility and sustainability within the industry. Therefore, Local Authorities and destination planners will need to better control the planning process required for the development of local tourism moving into the future (Charlton and Essex, 1996; Mason, 2006; Connell, Page and Bentley, 2009; Maxim, 2013; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019).

In Portugal, as in the rest of the world, the need for sustainable tourism development measures is urgent. The growth of tourism in this country has been exponential (Costa, 2021), with tourism representing 18.4 billion euros in tourist revenue and employing more than 416 thousand people (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2020). fundamental in the country's economic growth, contributing an estimated value of 202.5 billion euros to the country's GDP (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021). Although the Portuguese tourism industry has suffered significant losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some indicators that point out that the popularity of tourism in Portugal as a tourist destination remains, giving signs that the arrival of tourists will return to pre-pandemic numbers at the end of 2022 (Costa, 2021). Although these indicators are positive with regard to the increase in job offers and income (Franzoni, 2015), it also raises some doubts about the sustainable capacity of tourism in the long term in Portugal and once again emphasizes the need and urgency for sustainable development measures.

This research aims to examine the level of sustainable management of tourism in Portugal by policy makers and planners and will critically analyse stakeholders role and responsibilities in the sustainable management of tourism. In the long term, these data will be used to inform policy decision-makers to assist in the development of sustainable management policies and strategies for tourism in Portugal. Without effective policies and strategies, Portugal may run the risk of not guaranteeing its long-term tourism viability and sustainability.

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