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Innovative Sustainable Practices in Tourism: A Systematic Review of Contributions to Economic Growth and Community Benefits

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Abstract

Tourism plays a significant economic role in the world but also poses sustainability issues like environmental deterioration, strain on resources and unequal host community benefits. Innovative sustainable practices, such as digital technologies, models of community-based tourism, or regenerative or circular frameworks, are considered strategies that help reconcile tourism growth with environmental and social sustainability. This is a systematic review that summarizes recent evidence on the connection between these innovations, economic growth and community benefits. This research is a systematic literature review based on the PRISMA 2020 Statement. Searching in Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost, as well as manual searches of major tourism journals, identified studies published between 2013 and 2025. Following screening of 2,156 records with pre-established criteria, 15 studies were included in the thematic synthesis. Three broad types of innovation were determined: digital and technological innovations, community-based tourism models, and regenerative or circular economy strategies. Digital technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, and smart tourism systems enhance competitiveness and operational efficiency. Community-based models increase engagement, employment and cultural preservation, while regenerative strategies improve ecosystems, resource efficiency, and tourism value chains. Altogether, these innovations show positive relationships with economic development and community well-being.

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Keywords

Community-based tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism innovation, regenerative tourism, digital tourism technologies, sustainable development management, systematic review methodology, socio-economic effects of tourism.

Введение

Tourism is an active sector of the global economy and its post-pandemic recovery is resilient. The UN Tourism (2025) [UN Tourism, 2025] estimates that in 2024 the international arrivals were 99 percent of that of the pre-pandemic period, and that the figure will rise by a margin of 5 percent in the first half of the year 2025, close to 1.55 billion a year. The industry contributed nearly 10 percent to the global GDP (US\$ 10.9 trillion) and generated 357 million jobs in 2024 [WTTC, 2025]. This growth can add up to the economies of developing nations through means of foreign exchange, infrastructural development, poverty reduction but also heightens the concern of environmental degradation, commodification of culture, over tourism and unequal benefits making sustainable practices the only way to ensure that the practice is sustainable in the long term.

Sustainable tourism that is based on the Brundtland Report's definition of development meeting present needs without compromising future generations [World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987], has environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions [Cervený, 2022; Butler, 1999]. UN Tourism (2005) [UN Tourism, 2005] says that it takes into account the current and future impacts on the visitors, industry, environment and community. The principle has now gone further to regenerative tactics of restoring ecosystems and cultures, beyond harm reduction [Bellato et al., 2023; Tomassini and Cavagnaro, 2022]. Innovation makes this change possible by using digital technologies (e.g., AI, blockchain), community models, and postulates of the circular economy, which is focused on resource efficiency and waste reduction [Cave, Dredge, 2020; Gössling, Hall, 2021]. Destinations are now applying contactless services, virtual reality, and eco-innovations in post-COVID to deliver resilience, yet elements of integration are impaired in different settings [Talwar и др., 2023; Sharma и др., 2021; Sigala, 2020]. The relationship between tourism innovation and sustainability is important to determine the role of tourism in inclusive development or rising inequalities. It triggers growth directly, and indirectly, and it creates multipliers within local industries [WTTC, 2025]. Eco-lodges powered by renewable sources or craft digital platforms in developing economies can be a source of income for infrastructure and diversification, and can be aligned to SDGs 8 and 12 because of the low-carbon models to curb climatic risks [UNWTO, UNDP, 2017]. The community gains through it, employment, skills and empowerment of the marginalised groups and culture. The models of community-based models attain fair access to gains redistribution through local decision-making and profit sharing that reduce mass tourism leakages. The regenerative and circular approaches enhance unity, pride in the past, and flexibility. The improved livelihood, poverty reduction, and social capital are better achieved through engagement (i.e., participatory platforms or waste initiatives by residents) [Giampiccoli, Mtapuri, 2022]. Without sustainability and community orientation, innovations stand a chance of being displaced and washed off and this downplays growth. These connections are essential to comprehend so as to live in an unequal world happily.

Although there has been an increase in knowledge on sustainable tourism, there are still considerable gaps in terms of integration of innovations that would contribute to sustainability, economic growth and community benefits at the same time. Current literature is more likely to be divided into sub-themes, with technological developments, ecotourism activities, economic benefits, or community empowerment [Gössling, 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2021]. New research talks about the regenerative tourism [Bellato et al., 2023] and circular applications [Vargas-Sanchez, 2022], which feature restorative strategies, but little heroically connects digital, community-based, regenerative, and circular innovations to tangible economic and social impacts. Scholarly work after 2020 focuses on resilience and digitalization without extensive evidence about inclusive development in varied contexts

[Romao, Nijkamp, 2023]. Systematic reviews that explore this intersection and do so in a PRISMA-compliant manner are extremely rare and can be helpful only in the limited form that they present. In order to fill these knowledge gaps, the proposed review will synthesize the evidence regarding sustainable tourism innovations and their effects between 2013 and 2025.

This study is different from other studies because most of the available literature tend to dwell on single components of sustainable tourism, including technological tools, ecotourism, economic impacts, or community empowerment, as it is holistic research focused on integrating digital, community-based, regenerative, and circular innovations in a systematic manner. Although some concepts such as regenerative tourism or circular tourism have been used in past studies, hardly any study has clearly illustrated how the two can be used to help in economic growth as well as the community. Based on the research of the post-2020, which focuses more on resilience and digitalization, the review compiles all the evidence on different contexts to investigate the possibility of inclusive growth. In addition, the review, through the use of a systematic approach meeting the requirements of PRISMA, offers an orderliness of how the topic has evolved over the years and has surpassed the disjointed knowledge of previous literature. By doing this, it will provide practical suggestions to policymakers and destination managers, as it will help in connecting the theoretical framework with the real implications of sustainable tourism planning.

The proposed therefore study seeks to conduct a systematic review and evaluation of the literature available on the topic of innovative sustainable practices in tourism with specific reference to their role in economic development and the welfare of the local people. It aims to determine major types of innovation, evaluate their effects on the economic parameters of GDP contribution, employment opportunities, and revenue diversification, and how the practices can enhance results at the community scale, such as inclusive involvement, livelihoods advancement, and social justice. This study also explores the development of different methods, such as digital and technological solutions, community-based solutions, regenerative solutions, and circular economy solutions. It also examines the challenges, barriers, and opportunities of implementing and scaling these innovations. Discussing these aspects with the help of a PRISMA-based review, the study will aim to yield meaningful practical implications that can contribute to the theoretical and practical advances in the sphere of sustainable innovation in tourism.

Methodology

Study Design

The research takes the form of a systematic literature review (SLR) design to review the available literature on innovative sustainable tourism practices, and their connection with economic growth and community benefits. Systematic review was chosen as it is a structured, transparent and replicable method of identifying, appraising and synthesizing relevant literature and thus reduces bias over its traditional narrative counter parts [Tranfield et al., 2003]. The systematic approach best suits new interdisciplinary issues like the ones in the tourism innovation and sustainability where the research findings are widely scattered across various academic areas.

The review is based on PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which gives a well-established outline of reporting systematic reviews in social sciences and tourism research [Page et al., 2021]. Using the PRISMA framework enhances the transparency in the study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion that enable the rest of the researchers to repeat the process of conducting the review. Moreover, systematic reviews

have become an established way of knowledge synthesis and revealing gaps in research in the area of tourism and sustainability education [Pickering, Byrne, 2014]. In this work SLR has been implemented to combine various works of research and create a deeper picture of how new sustainable tourism actions can be used in the process of economic growth and community welfare.

Research Philosophy

This study is informed by a pragmatic philosophy of research, which values practical application of knowledge and permits combination of various perspectives and types of evidence. Pragmatism is appropriate in systematic reviews due to its emphasis on the interpretation of complex real-life issues in terms of the synthesis of empirical and conceptual studies rather than the use of one epistemological position [(Saunders et al., 2019)]. The research on sustainability in tourism may be associated with the use of various theories and methodologies, such as qualitative-based studies, quantitative-based studies, and conceptual discussions. The pragmatic approach is thus able to incorporate and elucidate those studies that use different research approaches. The pragmatic philosophy will enable the study to combine insights on various academic sources and create practical ramifications to the policymakers, tourism professionals, and scholars who are interested in sustainable tourism development [Hall, 2019].

Data Source and Search Strategy

In order to cover the most of the literature related to the subject matter, a systematic search using the three large academic databases; Scopus, Web of Science and EBSCOhost was carried out. These databases have been chosen due to the wide range of indexing of quality research on peer-reviewed studies in the field of tourism, sustainability, and management [Mongeon, Paul-Hus, 2016]. The systematic reviews can be enhanced through the utilization of multiple databases, which reduces the risk of publication bias and enhances the chances of finding the relevant studies.

Within the scope of search, the publications from 2013 to 2025 were considered, which corresponds to the recent trends in tourism innovation and sustainability due to the global focus on sustainable development goals and the active growth of online technologies in tourism systems. Besides running searches on the database, the leading tourism journals were searched by hand to identify potential relevant articles, which could not be accessed by only running database searches. This strategy is recommended in systematic review methodology to make the process complete and enhance the strength of the literature selection process [Pickering, Byrne, 2014].

As depicted in figure 1, in the first search, 2,156 records have been identified, and then narrowed down to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were that the studies had to explore innovative sustainable tourism practices and be able to provide evidence on how such innovations are connected to economic results or benefits to the community. Upon the implementation of the screening and eligibility assessment procedures of the PRISMA framework, 15 studies were included in the thematic synthesis. These sources were used to identify major categories of innovation, such as digital and technological innovations, community-based tourism models, and regenerative or circular economy approaches and assess how they have impacted economic development and community welfare in tourism destinations.

Search strings were Boolean operators, truncation and phrases within clusters: (1) tourism innovation ("tourism innovation" OR "innovative practices" OR "sustainable innovation" OR "digital tourism" OR "eco-innovation" OR "smart tourism" OR "technological innovation" OR "regenerative tourism"); (2) sustainability ("sustainable tourism" OR "responsible tourism" OR "regenerative tourism" OR "circular economy" OR "green tourism" OR "eco-friendly practices"); (3) outcomes ("economy AND; OR expanded in clusters. Limitations imposed on title / abstract / key words; English-only because of dominance of scholarship. In early January 2026, searches were made, and late-2025 items alerted to.

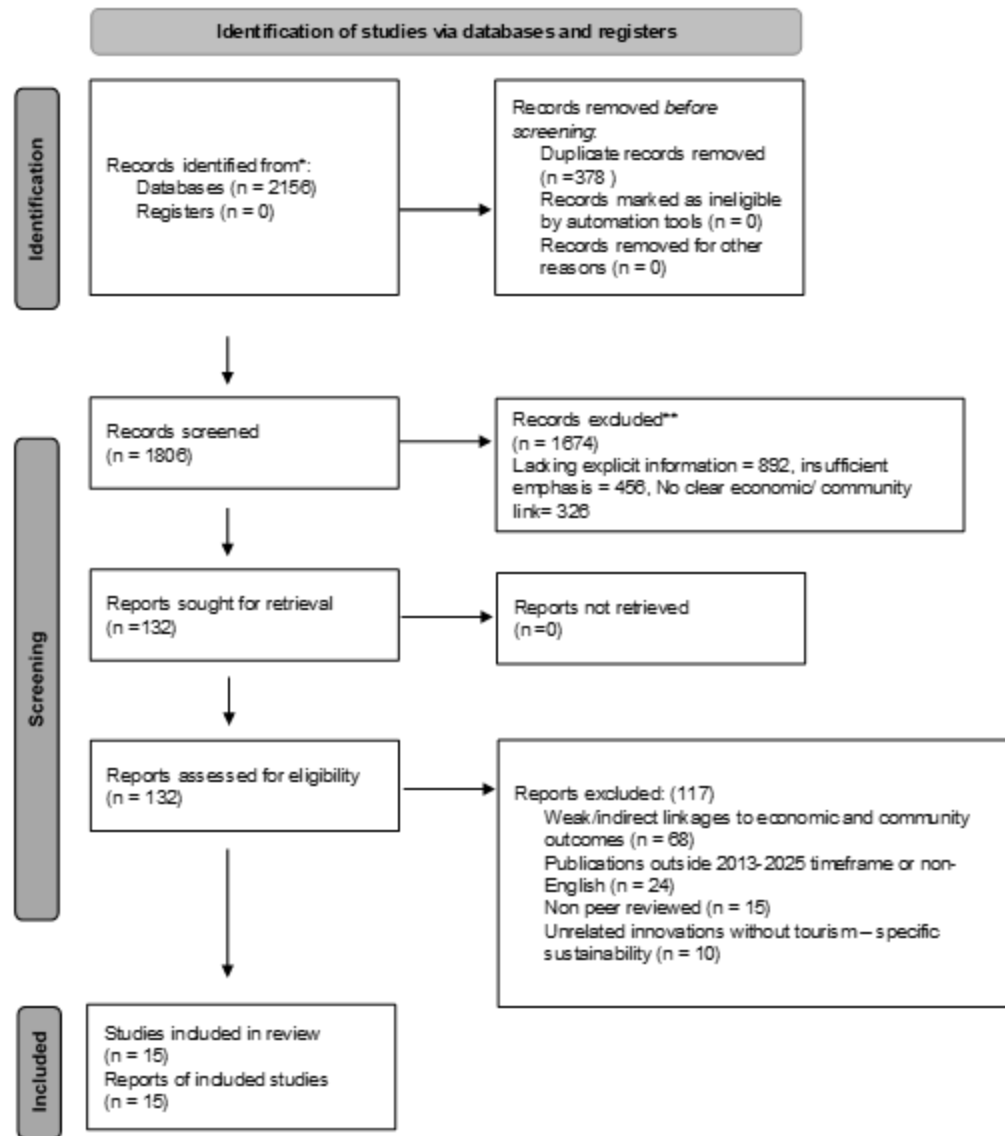


Figure 1 - PRISMA diagram of source identification procedures used in the CBT review [Moher et al.; Citation2009]

Screening and Selection Process

As indicated in figure 1, screening was done in two stages. Deduplication of records imported to EndNote. Stage one filtered titles/abstracts based on criteria, indicating ambiguity to full-text. Stage two evaluated complete texts to do the eligibility test, noting exclusions (e.g., weak links). The PRISMA 2020 flow chart in figure 1 outlines the stages: identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion, to be more specific, transparency and traceability to thousands of hits to the ultimate focused set.

Extraction was based on an Excel template that included: author/year; context; type of innovation (digital/technological, community-based, regenerative, circular, hybrid); sustainability dimensions; economic connections (e.g., jobs, revenue); community benefits (e.g., empowerment, livelihoods); methodology; results; limitations. It was a systematic and verified process. Because of heterogeneity, thematic synthesis was exercised in line with Braun and Clarke (2006) [Braun, Clarke, 2006]: the data were coded, themes (e.g., types of innovation, mechanisms) were grouped, categories were narrowed down to the questions.

Results

Systematic search was performed in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines 2020 and a total of 2,156 records were obtained using three major databases, including Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and EBSCOhost. The remaining 28 records were by hand searching the major tourism journals such as Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research.

EndNote was used to eliminate duplicate records ($n = 378$), and 1,806 unique studies were left to undergo title and abstract screening. In this phase, 1,674 were dropped because they did not focus on innovation ($n = 892$), did not give enough emphasis on sustainability ($n = 456$), and did not have strong links with the economy and communities ($n = 326$).

One hundred and thirty-two articles were evaluated as eligible. Among them, 117 articles were filtered out: indirect connection to outcomes ($n = 68$), published after 2013-2025 or in non-English ($n = 24$), not peer-reviewed articles ($n = 15$), and not related innovations with the sustainability topic related to tourism ($n = 10$). A total of 15 studies that included conceptual, review, qualitative, and quantitative designs were included in the final review. These papers contained direct evidence of the connection between innovative sustainable tourism practices and economic growth and community benefits which were the basis of their thematic synthesis (see PRISMA flow diagram, Figure 1).

Characteristics of Included Studies

Table 1 - Features of Included studies

Research Type	Authors & Year	Method / Approach	Context / Setting
Conceptual	[Dredge, 2022; Manniche et al., 2021]	Conceptual	Global, Europe/Denmark
Bibliometric / Critical Review	[Loureiro & Nascimento, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020]	Bibliometric analysis, critical literature review	Global, national-level insights
Qualitative	[Socratous et al., 2025]	Focus groups	Cyprus
Case Analyses	[Imbaya et al., 2019; Aprilani et al., 2021]	Case study analysis	Indonesia (Lombok), Kenya
Quantitative	[Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025; Sun et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024]	Panel data analyses (GMM/ARDL)	China, India, small islands, Europe

The way innovations are distributed is: AI, IoT, big data, platforms, three community-based, three regenerative/circular. Adjusted CASP assessments rated the studies as high/medium for clear aims and contributions, albeit with conceptual works observing the constraints of generalisability. Table 1 describes the author/year, type of innovation, context, methodology and essential economic/community connections.

Table 2 - Summary of Included Studies

No	Authors (Year)	Innovation Type	Context	Methodology	Key Links to Economic Growth	Key Links to Community Benefits
1	Dredge (2022)	Regenerative	Global/conceptual	Viewpoint/reflective	Transformational systems change for long-term viability	Mindset shift to compassion, community-centred development
2	Loureiro & Nascimento (2021)	Digital/technological	Global	Bibliometric review	Emerging trends driving competitiveness	Balanced risks/ benefits for inclusive practices

No	Authors (Year)	Innovation Type	Context	Methodology	Key Links to Economic Growth	Key Links to Community Benefits
3	Fatema et al. (2024)	Digital/ technological (AI, IoT)	Global/ climate change era	Book chapter/ review	Data-driven efficiency, resilient growth	Human-centric Industry 5.0 for social well-being
4	Chakraborty (2024)	Digital/ technological (blockchain, IoT, AI)	Global	Book chapter	Operational efficiency, cost reduction	Positive experiences, ecosystem preservation
5	Socratous et al. (2025)	Technology-driven	Cyprus (island)	Qualitative focus group	Progress despite barriers, investment needs	Stakeholder collaboration for sustainable positioning
6	Imbaya et al. (2019)	Community-based	Kenya	Qualitative case analysis	Inclusive growth outcomes	Capacity building, empowerment, learning organisations
7	Aprilani et al. (2021)	Community-based	Indonesia (Lombok)	Empirical analysis	Government-facilitated growth inclusivity	Local participation overcoming barriers (education, gender)
8	Behera & Deb (2022)	Community-based	India	Secondary analysis	Economic momentum for locals	Substantial resident benefits, sustainable alternative
9	Rodríguez et al. (2020)	Circular economy	Global/ tourism sector	Critical literature review	Resource optimisation gaps	Identified needs for social equity integration
10	Manniche et al. (2021)	Circular economy	Scandinavian/ Danish hotel case	Theoretical/ empirical example	Integrative framework for sustainability	Transformative host-guest relationships
11	Pustovit (2025)	Digital innovations	General tourism companies	Analytical review	Competitiveness, profitability, loyalty	Personalised services, resource efficiency
12	Seetanah & Fauzel (2025)	Digitalisation moderation	Small island economies	Panel ARDL	Enhanced tourism-led growth	Conditional inclusive benefits via e-tourism
13	Sun et al. (2025)	Digitalisation/ ICT	Global income groups	GMM panel analysis	Sustained tourism increase	Smart destinations, resilient communities
14	Tang et al. (2022)	Digital economy	China (urban)	Benchmark/ threshold/ SDM	Direct drive, spatial spillovers	Marginal effects in less-developed cities
15	Yu et al. (2024)	Digital economy	China (provincial)	Empirical panel	Efficiency, upgrading, innovation	Inclusive high-quality development

Thematic Findings on Innovative Sustainable Practices

Digital and Technological Innovations

The theme of digital and technological innovations is highly prevalent in the included studies, as 9 out of 15 of the selected works mention the use of these innovations as one of the key drivers of sustainable tourism change in an increasingly connected and data-driven global environment. Such innovations have diverse tools and systems, such as artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, blockchain, augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), mobile applications, and more general infrastructures of the digital economy, such as ICT networks and e-tourism platforms, which are all oriented to efficiency, personalisation, resource optimisation, and competitiveness and solve the

sustainability issues of carbon emissions, waste generation, and over tourism pressures [El Archi et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024; Issakov et al., 2025; Zeqiri et al., 2025].

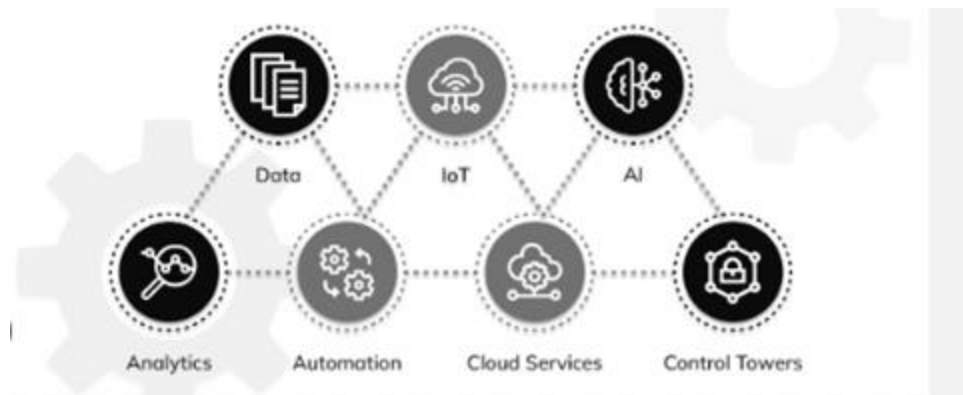


Figure 2- Digital Transformation Hybrid

In their systematic review of literature on 139 articles, Loureiro and Nascimento (2021) [Loureiro, Nascimento, 2021] present an introductory summary of the key trends including AI, IoT, the integration of the circular economy, big data, and AR/VR while totalling contradictory views on risks (e.g., data privacy concerns, digital divides) and benefits (e.g., improved demand forecasting and environmentally friendly personalisation); they extract five distinct streams of work, including technological adoption frameworks to ethical considerations, that provide a more comprehensive view of how the tools may help.

Continuing on this, Fatema et al. (2024) [Fatema et al., 2024] highlight AI and IoT as information-based solutions to real-time control over resource consumption, encouraging renewable energy use, and enabling environmentally friendly practices, specifically in the framework of the increasing carbon footprint of tourism that is projected to reach 6.5 GtCO₂e by 2025, by promoting human-friendly integration of machines and people as the core of Industry 5.0. Chakraborty (2024) [Chakraborty, 2024] adds to it by explaining specific solutions such as blockchain to implement transparent supply chains, IoT to reduce waste and monitor carbon and AI to streamline operations, which leads to cost savings, improved visitor management, minimised environmental effects on the environment, and attracting eco-conscious travellers who emphasise sustainability in their decision-making.

Based on qualitative focus group understanding with Cypriot policy-makers, Socratous et al. (2025) [Socratous et al., 2025] show the practical implementation challenges of small islands, including high investment requirements, bureaucracy, and aging systems, but also bring forward innovative suggestions on how these can be overcome through stakeholder cooperation, which in the end, makes technology a tool to promote Cyprus as a sustainable destination with multiple offerings. Pustovit (2025) [Pustovit, 2025] is business-level oriented, explaining the automation of business processes through online booking systems, mobile applications, artificial intelligence personalisation, and VR experiences that make businesses more profitable, customer-loyal, and cost-effective, however, emphasising that to successfully implement these changes, it is important to develop infrastructure and ensure data security. These connections are further strengthened by quantitative empirical evidence: Seetanah and Fauzel (2025) [Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025] demonstrate the moderating role of digitalisation in the tourism-growth nexus through panel ARDL analysis of small island economies, finding that e-tourism mediates economic benefits and confirming the bi-directional causality; Sun et al. (2025) [Sun et al., 2025] use GMM on global panels to show that ICT-driven tourism growth is accompanied by

growth in infrastructure and FDI, and recommends that smart destinations install tourist information centres to address emergency. Taken together, these works are setting up digital innovations not as tools but as systemic facilitators that, when carefully considered, propel sustainable tourism into the future by balancing the growth needs with the ecological and social obligations.

Community-Based and participatory Models.

Community-based and participatory models are innovative approaches emphasizing bottom-up, inclusive strategies that focus on local participation, capacity building, and equitable distribution of benefits to reduce inequalities from traditional tourism, particularly in developing and rural areas. Imbaya et al. (2019) [Imbaya et al., 2019] show that Kenyan CBT projects face complexities in implementing capacity-building interventions, including limited interactions, learning opportunities, and teamwork, yet development assistance leads to inclusive growth, empowerment, and sustainable impacts, facilitated by training and stakeholder engagement. Aprilani et al. (2021) [Aprilani et al., 2021] highlight the government's role in Indonesia's Mandalika Special Economic Zone, including planning, facility development, expenditure policies, regulation enforcement, and community participation, while noting education, employment, and gender disparities as factors requiring targeted measures for equitable benefit distribution. Behera and Deb (2022) [Behera, Deb, 2022] identify Indian CBT projects' potential for economic momentum, livelihood diversification, and poverty alleviation, while governance challenges, skills gaps, and market access require policy support for full implementation. Across these studies, participatory governance and capacity building emerge as key mechanisms for redistributing power and profits to communities, promoting resilience, cultural sustenance, and long-term viability compared to top-down approaches.

Regenerative and Circular Economy Approaches

Three studies discuss regenerative and circular economy strategies as future-looking paradigms that go beyond the harm-reduction perspective of sustainability and actively regenerate ecosystems, cultures, and economies by use of closed-loop systems, changing mindsets, and transformative practices. Dredge (2022) [Dredge, 2022] identifies regenerative tourism as needing shifts in social-ecological consciousness, from individualistic "me" thinking to compassionate "we" thinking, proposing community-centred, environment-oriented principles and five areas of reflection to challenge status quo practices and inspire bottom-up regeneration. Rodriguez et al. (2020) [Rodriguez et al., 2020] reveal a lack of resource recycling, reuse, and recovery in tourism, with widespread energy/water usage, food waste, and emissions, highlighting the need for greater integration to optimise material use and enhance social equity and environmental benefits. Manniche et al. (2021) [Manniche et al., 2021] present CE as a theoretically framed socio-technical transition, demonstrating how restorative principles in a Danish hotel business model can transform value chains and consumption patterns through close host-guest relationships. All contributions promote regenerative and circular innovations as system disruptions that regenerate rather than sustain, with policy, business model, and research implications for advancing restorative tourism futures.

Illustrative Case Examples

In order to base the thematic results on the real-world scenarios, a number of studies present some illustrative case studies of emergent practices and their results. In community-based models, Kenyan wildlife conservancy programs in communities [Imbaya et al., 2019] represent capacity-building within the context of interaction restrictions; Mandalika zone in Indonesia [Aprilani et al., 2021] is an example of government-facilitated development despite socio-economic constraints; and several Indian rural programs [Behera, Deb, 2022] represent alternative development options. In the case of circular economy, a Danish hotel can be taken as a practical example of restorative business modelling [Manniche et al., 2021]. Examples of digital innovations include Cypriot plans to make the island

technologically integrated [Socratous et al., 2025], using the small islands as the accelerators of e-tourism [Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025], global smart destinations [Sun et al., 2025], and urban/provincial digitalisation with spatial implications in China [Tang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024]. The cases also make the synthesis richer through providing real-world applicability, challenges, and successes in various settings.

Links to Economic Growth

The studies included strongly associate innovative sustainable practices with economic growth, which is mostly achieved by the means of efficiency improvement, competitiveness increasing, revenue diversification and multiplier impacts that deliver benefits across the supply chains and regions. Most eminent is the digital innovations, and empirical evidence confirms the directly causal driving forces and moderated amplification: e.g., the advances of the digital economy in Chinese cities lead to nonlinear growth with spatial spill overs [Tang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024], and digitalisation enables higher returns in tourism led by the digital economy (seizure via e-tourism) in small islands [Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025] and via ICT infrastructure [Sun et al., 2025]. The models based on communities add an inclusive momentum through local involvement and governmental facilitation [Aprilani et al., 2021; Behera and Deb, 2022; Imbaya et al., 2019]. Regenerative and circular strategies offer sustainability in the long term due to resource optimisation and system transformation [Dredge, 2022; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Manniche et al., 2021], which aligns the growth and resilience to shocks.

Contributions to Community Benefits and Broader Sustainable Development

The advantages of contributions to community benefits include empowerment, equity, nurturing of skills, and improvements in well-being, among more general sustainable development in line with SDGs such as inclusive growth (SDG 8) and responsible production (SDG 12). The studies that are based on communities focus on capacity building, participation overcoming barriers, and resident gains ([Imbaya и др., 2019; Aprilani и др., 2021; Behera, Deb, 2022]. Digital solutions provide human-centred resilience and non-discriminatory access through smart solutions [Fatema et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2025], whereas regenerative transformation creates empathetic and place-based empowerment [Dredge, 2022]. Circular models emphasise integrating equity and transformative relationships [Manniche et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020]. All these practices combine to facilitate restorative and inclusive pathways that are holistic in terms of environmental, social and economic aspects.

Discussion

Interpretation and Synthesis of Key Findings

The 15 studies summarise the emerging sustainable practices, namely digital/technological, community-based, and regenerative/circular, as the leverages to reconcile the economic demands of tourism with sustainability and equity, evolving towards harm reduction to active restoration. The most common enablers of the ecosystem are digital innovations, which were found in nine studies and transform the ecosystem through efficiency, personalisation, and data-driven decisions. According to Loureiro and Nascimento (2021), Fatema et al. (2024), Chakraborty (2024), and Pustovit (2025) [Loureiro, Nascimento, 2021; Fatema и др., 2024; Chakraborty, 2024; Pustovit, 2025], AI/IoT monitoring, blockchain transparency, and platforms that maximise costs, enhance competitiveness/profitability, and minimise emissions/waste per SDG 12 are stressed, as indicated in figure 3. The nonlinear, moderating, spill over effects of Chinese [Tang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024] and small island/global panels [Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025; Sun et al., 2025] favour less-developed regions by distributing digitalisation more effectively, upgrading it, and equipping it with smart features, and this makes digitalisation a conditional growth accelerator.

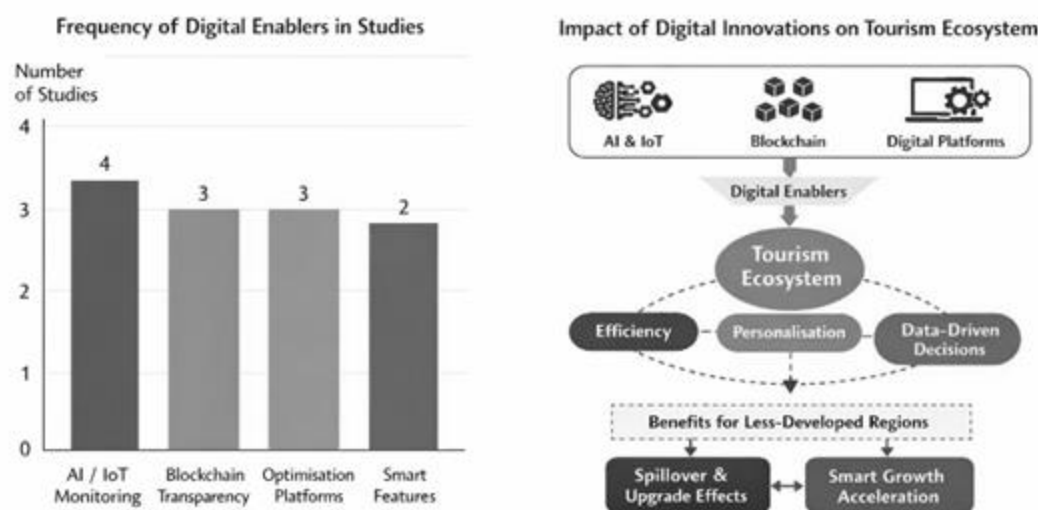


Figure 3 - Frequency of Digital Enablers and Impact on Tourism

Imbaya et al. (2019), Aprilani et al. (2021), and Behera and Deb (2022) [Imbaya et al., 2019; Aprilani et al., 2021; Behera and Deb, 2022] redistribute downward through capacity building, facilitation, empowerment, and inclusive growth is promoted even in the face of education/gender barriers in Kenya, Indonesia, and India, through community-based models. Linear models are criticised by the regenerative/circular approaches, which support place-based regeneration, compassion shifts, and host-guest transitions as equity-driven alternatives [Dredge, 2022; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Manniche et al., 2021]. Digitally, in a mutually dependent relationship, it enhances others (e.g., e-tourism, circular monitoring), connects to multipliers/resilience economically, and to empowerment/well-being socially, and is a promising prospect as a regenerative power, post-pandemic/climate eras.

Challenges and Barriers to Adoption

Research identifies structural / institutional obstacles to adoption as factors that need specific interventions [Chountalas et al., 2025; Dias, 2024; McLoughlin et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2024]. Infrastructure shortages, huge investments, bureaucracy, and obsolete systems in islands such as Cyprus [Socratous et al., 2025], security issues, and divides and risk perceptions [Loureiro, Nascimento, 2021; Pustovit, 2025] increase inequalities among smaller operators. There is conditional evidence of digitised limits: digitalisation moderation [Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025] and spill overs with limited boundaries [Tang et al., 2022], which suggests unequal developing/advanced access.

The community-based models are complicated by capacity issues - minimal interactions, lack of learning, no vision [Imbaya et al., 2019] and education/employment/gender problems [Aprilani et al., 2021] and governance/skills problems [Behera, Deb, 2022], which restrict the local capture in the face of the external dominance. Thrives on waste/emissions without integration by regenerative/circular grapple, reductionism [Dredge, 2022], and circular economy gaps in resource-intensive tourism [Rodríguez et al., 2020; Manniche et al., 2021]. Cross-cutting issues: inconsistency in policy, misalignment, financial constraints, ethical demands - context-specific and collaborative adoption.

Opportunities for Future Development

The results display opportunities positioning practices of resilient, high-quality tourism through trends/synergies. Digital provides acceleration of e-tourism, real-time smart destinations [Sun et al.,

2025; Seetanah, Fauzel, 2025], and Industry 5.0 human-machine models of low-impact personalisation [Fatema et al., 2024; Chakraborty, 2024] and can be addressed through investment, proposals [Socratous et al., 2025], and fusions [Yu et al., 2024] to enhance innovation/inclusivity.

Rural/developing livelihood diversification/cultural preservation fits the framework of community-based scaling through capacity modalities, regulation, participation [Imbaya et al., 2019; Aprilani et al., 2021; Behera, Deb, 2022].

Limitations of the Included Studies and the Review

Research and analysis indicate that there are weaknesses that require careful attention and improvement. Primary studies tend to be conceptual/perspective [Dredge, 2022], bibliometric/survey [Loureiro et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020], or qualitative/case-based [Socratous et al., 2025; Imbaya et al., 2019] in nature, offering richness but little generalisability due to the specificity of the context [Tang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024]

Geographical bias to Asia (China, Indonesia, India), islands, Europe limits underrepresented areas (Africa outside of Kenya, Latin America). Temporal focus (2019-2025) takes into account only digital surges but not pre-2019 bases. The review (15 studies) is at risk of selection bias despite PRISMA because the interpretive thematic synthesis is used instead of statistical aggregation because of the heterogeneity. Empirical limits are reflected in medium quality ratings; the English restriction rules out non-English work. These point to the need of exploratory evidence, which requires longitudinal/comparative/mixed-methods to reinforce causality and representativeness.

Conclusions and Implications

Summary of Contributions

The systematic review based on PRISMA 2020 synthesises 15 articles (2019-2025) to provide timely information on the subject of innovative sustainable tourism practices and their connections with economic growth and community benefits under the influence of digital disruption, post-pandemic recovery, and climate pressures. It synthesises three major forms of innovation (digital/technological (nine studies), community-based (three), and regenerative/circular (three)) and how they transit beyond defensive sustainability to proactive, restorative, and inclusive pathways. Digital innovations lead to growth through AI, IoT, big data and digital infrastructures that make them efficient, save costs, personalised and smart with none-linear effects, spill overs and moderation in such contexts as China, small islands and global panels. In Kenya, Indonesia, and India, barriers notwithstanding, community-based models redistribute benefits by means of capacity building and participation that support livelihoods. Regenerative/circular practices advocate compassion, closed-loop, and host-guest regeneration of the ecosystem. Connected to outcomes such as competitiveness/ multipliers and empowerment /equity, and examples such as Cypriot tech, Danish hotels, and Lombok zones, the review is a narration of how these practices alleviate externalities whilst creating resilient, SDG 8/12-compatible prosperity in an encouraging evidence base.

Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to the theory of sustainable tourism by positioning innovation as a point of contact between economic restoration and socio-ecological restoration. It supports the hypothesis of tourism-led growth with digitalisation as the moderator (based on panel evidence), proposing conditional models related to technology/infrastructure and hybrid theories of digital economy and sustainability transitions. The advantages of community-based theory include focus on learning organisations and governance to achieve equity, and a framework of redistribution of power to gender/education barriers. Regenerative / circular inclusions mark the transition of triple-bottom-line

to restorative ontologies, theorising tourism as complex adaptive systems requiring compassion and socio-technical transformation over reductionism - the critique of linear economies and the focus on place-based regeneration/value chains. On the whole, it creates interdisciplinary overlap in the area of digital transformation, circular economy, and regenerative, providing the basis of subtle multi-level (micro-meso-macro) models of heterogeneous/spill over impacts in global-local spaces.

Practical and Policy Recommendations.

The evidence presents useful suggestions to the stakeholders to use innovations as a source of competitiveness and integration. The firms are to invest in digital (AI/IoT monitoring, mobile/VR experiences, blockchain transparency) and smaller players collaborating on infrastructure and inclusive finance to be efficient and loyal. Community-based activities should have increased capacity programmes on interactions, skills (gender/education), and profit retention/cultural preservation planning. Circular/ regenerative practitioners are expected to embrace closed loop systems and restorative host-guest interactions. To stimulate development in developing/island regions, policymakers should increase amounts of digital infrastructure (e.g., remote 4G, smart centres) and e-tourism, but control community areas to provide mechanisms that are inclusive. The solutions should include wider policies to finance mindset changes, enforce circular economy waste reduction, and establish cross-stakeholder platforms to surmount challenges, aligning tourism with sustainability/resilience agendas. Human-centric, equitable, scalable innovations are essential with the help of public-private-community partnerships.

Directions for Future Research

This review also presents gaps in which future studies on innovative sustainable tourism can be done. The empirical research needs to be limited not to the dominance of Asian/small islands, but to underrepresented regions (e.g., expanded Africa, Latin America, Oceania) through longitudinal research of regenerative effects and causality in diverse settings. Heterogeneity, spill overs, and experiences can be described using mixed-methods (e.g., GMM/ARDL with micro-data): comparing recovery using pre-2020 baselines. Theoretical evolution requires composite models that combine digital, CBT and regenerative aspects, maybe through complex system simulations or multi-level analyses (micro efficiency, meso upgrading, macro moderation). Some meta-analysis with more homogeneity could be incorporated in reviews or grey/non-English sources or interventions such as digital-community hybrids can be tested.

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Инновационные методы устойчивого развития в туризме: систематический обзор вклада в экономический рост и общественные выгоды

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Аннотация

Туризм играет важную экономическую роль в мире, но также создает проблемы устойчивого развития, такие как ухудшение состояния окружающей среды, нагрузка на ресурсы и неравные выгоды принимающего сообщества. Инновационные методы устойчивого развития, такие как цифровые технологии, модели туризма на базе местных сообществ, регенеративные или циклические структуры, считаются стратегиями, которые помогают согласовать рост туризма с экологической и социальной устойчивостью. Это систематический обзор, в котором обобщены последние данные о связи между этими инновациями, экономическим ростом и выгодами для сообщества. Это исследование представляет собой систематический обзор литературы, основанный на заявлении PRISMA 2020. Поиск в Scopus, Web of Science и EBSCOhost, а также поиск вручную в основных туристических журналах выявил исследования, опубликованные в период с 2013 по 2025 год. После отбора 2156 записей по заранее установленным критериям в тематический сборник были включены 15 исследований. Были определены три основных типа инноваций: цифровые и технологические инновации, модели туризма на базе местных сообществ и стратегии регенеративной экономики или экономики замкнутого цикла. Цифровые технологии, такие как искусственный интеллект, большие данные и интеллектуальные туристические системы, повышают конкурентоспособность и операционную эффективность. Модели, основанные на сообществах, повышают вовлеченность, занятость и сохранение культуры, в то время как стратегии регенерации улучшают экосистемы, эффективность использования ресурсов и цепочки создания стоимости в сфере туризма. В целом, эти инновации демонстрируют позитивную взаимосвязь с экономическим развитием и благосостоянием сообщества.

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Ключевые слова

Общественный туризм, устойчивый туризм, туристические инновации, восстановительный туризм, цифровые туристические технологии, управление устойчивым развитием, методология систематического обзора, социально-экономические эффекты туризма.

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