

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ON A GLOBAL EXPERIENCE:
LEADER COUNTRIES AND THEIR STRATEGY**

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Abstract: Today, among the leading countries in sustainable tourism, mainly the Nordic countries are not losing their leadership status. Their specific policy plays an important role in this. In this article, the experience of Nordic countries as countries with developed sustainable tourism is studied.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Nordic countries, policy, action plan.

The World Tourism Organization's definition of sustainable tourism¹

Guidelines and management practices for sustainable tourism development apply to all forms of tourism in all types of areas, including mass tourism and various tourism segments. The principles of sustainability imply environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and an appropriate balance must be struck between these three dimensions to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Thus, sustainable tourism:

1) Optimal use of ecological resources, which are a key element of tourism development, conservation of important ecological processes and assistance in conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

2) to respect the culture of the host communities, to travel without compromising their historical and living cultural heritage and traditional values, thereby contributing to intercultural tolerance.

3) ensuring fairly distributed socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders, including sustainable employment and income opportunities, and the provision of social services to host communities and vital, long-term economic operations that contribute to poverty alleviation.

The development of sustainable tourism requires strong political leadership to ensure the participation of all stakeholders, as well as broad participation and consensus. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires continuous monitoring of impacts and the introduction of necessary preventive and / or corrective measures as needed.

Sustainable tourism should also achieve satisfaction and provide a meaningful experience for tourists by providing them with a high level of quality, raising their awareness of sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices among

¹ Making Tourism more Sustainable-A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12

them.

Simply put, 'sustainable tourism can be defined as a type of tourism that meets the needs of industry, the environment, tourists, and host communities at the same time, taking full account of current and future potential economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Further stabilization of tourism is achieved through tourism planning, which means taking these influences and needs into account in its development. It is a process that is constantly being improved and applies equally to tourism in cities, resorts, rural and coastal areas, mountains and protected areas. It also applies to all forms of business and leisure tourism.

Climate change. Climate change is a major problem for the long-term sustainability of tourism in two senses: climate change has negative consequences for tourism and tourism contributes negatively to climate change.

Transport-related CO₂ emissions remain a major challenge and require close cooperation with transportation sectors around the world to support the commitment of guidelines to accelerate carbon emissions from the tourism sector.

- In 2016-2030, CO₂ emissions related to the share of transport in the tourism sector are expected to increase from 1.597 million tons to 1.998 million tons.
- The rate of international and domestic visits is projected to increase mainly from domestic tourism, followed by international visits from \$ 20 billion to \$ 37 billion.
- Tourism-related transport waste accounted for 22% of all transport waste in 2016, and this trend is expected to continue until 2030.

Outcomes: The significant impact of climate change and environmental problems currently occurring means that the term sustainability cannot be ignored. It is clear that this will be an area that can have an impact on every industry in the world and become a trend in the next decade. The tourism sector is often cited as one of the main causes of global climate problems. This is due to the fact that in 2012 alone, the number of tourists reached a record one billion, which is a significant increase in carbon footprint. By 2030, these numbers are projected to reach 1.8 billion a year. So the question arises, if 1 billion tourists have already been exposed to the environment, how will this impact be estimated by 2030.

While there are some shortcomings in the research conducted by many institutions involved in global sustainable tourism projects, most of them are encouraged. In the coming years, nearly a third of tourists will choose sustainable routes. 79% of tourists unaware of this type of tourism want to go to ecological destinations, while 39% of tourists want to visit sustainable tourist destinations.

Almost twice the increase in sustainable destinations.

According to a global survey by Booking.com, between 2014 and 2015, the demand for sustainable destinations increased by almost 50 percent. Another study by

these tour operators found that about 83 percent of travelers prefer to pay better for an eco-friendly hotel.

According to a new report by the global market research company Euromonitor International, ITB Berlin, “Best Countries for Sustainable Tourism,” 66.4 percent of consumers worldwide want having a positive impact on the environment through their daily efforts in 2021.

According to the report, Scandinavia is setting an example of striving and moving forward on sustainable travel, with Sweden in first place, followed by Finland, Austria, Estonia and Norway. These findings from the new Sustainable Travel Index, developed by Euromonitor International, assess 99 destinations in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability, country risk, as well as sustainable tourism demand, transport and accommodation.

Carolyn Bremner, head of Euromonitor International’s travel division, analyzes: “Sweden is a pioneer in life cycle assessment research, which is important for understanding the full impact of consumer behavior and consumption patterns is”. The country is actively pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals and will maintain Arctic ice and permafrost to help stop climate change, and achieve pure zero emissions by 2045.

Other countries are also making good progress in sustainable transport and housing. In addition to the top 20 - other European countries like Germany and France - we find New Zealand, Bolivia and Canada.

Bremner² said in his speech “On a global scale, there is a clear shift in thinking and resistance to a return to the travel and tourism model. Instead, stakeholders are coming together for a “better recovery” by creating value from sustainable tourism. As COP26 continues to grow rapidly, consumers, travel brands, targeted marketing organizations and governments continue to unite to prevent climate emergencies”.

Practice of the sustainability of tourism in the Nordics:

All Scandinavian countries are committed to sustainable development at the highest government level. All of them have been committed to the Paris Agreement since 2015, and all of them have included the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, in their national policy goals. Stability, social cohesion, green growth and the fight against climate change are key pillars of the Scandinavian Cooperation and the Northern Council's Vision for 2030. The Nordic Business Ministers' Northern Tourism Cooperation Plan for 2019-2023³, in which sustainability is an important issue.

² <https://www.travindy.com/2021/03/top-countries-for-sustainable-tourism-report-launched/>

³ Nordic Council of Ministers (2019). Plan for Nordic Tourism Co-operation 2019–2023.

As the impact of tourism and travel grows on a global and regional scale, the forces of play in and around the industry have become more specific and controversial. Before the global COVID-19 pandemic forced the industry to shut down in early 2020, tourism was one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy, contributing significantly to job creation, export earnings and domestic value added. Both governments and industry have recognized tourism as an important factor in economic growth and development. The global impact of tourism and its level of penetration into local communities, natural and cultural environments makes the sector an important driver for change. This means great opportunities and challenges at the same time. Many of these problems are part of the global category of “bad problems,” meaning problems that are complex and often difficult to solve for conflicting reasons. These include overtourism, sustainability in a global and local context, seasonality and social problems, the development of fragile destinations, lack of agility and skills, and the need to develop new and more expensive business models.

In Nordic countries:

* Sustainability is high on the agenda in all northern countries, but countries differ greatly in their understanding, ambitions, approaches and the extent to which they implement measures to ensure sustainability in the tourism industry across the region.

* The vision of the Northern Council of Ministers until 2030 provides a strong vision for making the Nordic the most stable and integrated region in the world. To implement this overview, an integrated, integrated strategy approach to sustainability in tourism is needed. Some northern countries have announced new tourism strategies, while others have developed new strategies in 2021, where sustainability is becoming a key strategic priority.

* The Scandinavian countries have a concept of sustainability that encompasses not only the environment but also the environmental, social and economic spheres.

Sustainability in travel and tourism is at the top of the political agenda in all Northern countries. Countries understand the importance of monitoring sustainability in tourism and are leading the way globally in developing and implementing approaches to sustainability. Many northern routes have experience, data, opportunities, recognition and brand value as a sustainable route. All northern countries use the UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, perceptions, ambitions, and approaches to sustainability vary significantly across northern countries and directions. Often, there has been a struggle to identify meaningful indicators for tracking sustainability, and more precisely what we are tracking and why we are tracking it. Nevertheless, the Scandinavian countries seek inspiration and cooperation from each other when it comes to best practices for improving sustainability in travel and tourism.


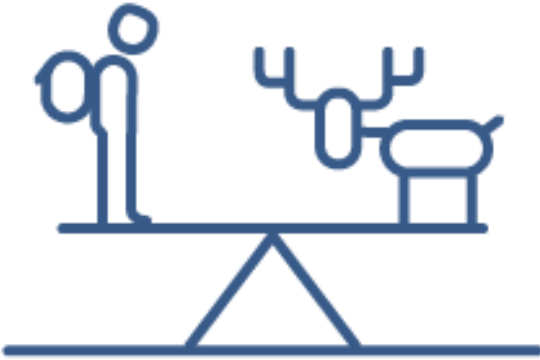
Future Perspectives for Nordic Tourism Sustainability

An analysis of the Four Futures Framework, supported by Group NAO, was conducted to facilitate a constructive discussion of future scenarios and to explore options, actions and possible outcomes working towards sustainability in Scandinavian tourism.

The four futures framework was used to encourage creative discussion and exploration of opportunities for future scenarios of sustainable tourism. The aim was to give participants the freedom to move beyond depicting the future in terms of traditionally accepted truths, and instead to encourage them to develop a shared preferred future⁴. Scandinavian and international tourism experts were encouraged to imagine and discuss the “new possible future” of tourism sustainability in the northern countries and the obstacles facing the envisaged development path. The debate about the possible future of Northern tourism sustainability has inevitably been overshadowed by the catastrophic events that have taken place since the launch of COVID-19 and the tremendous pressures now being experienced by the tourism industry in all countries and around the world.

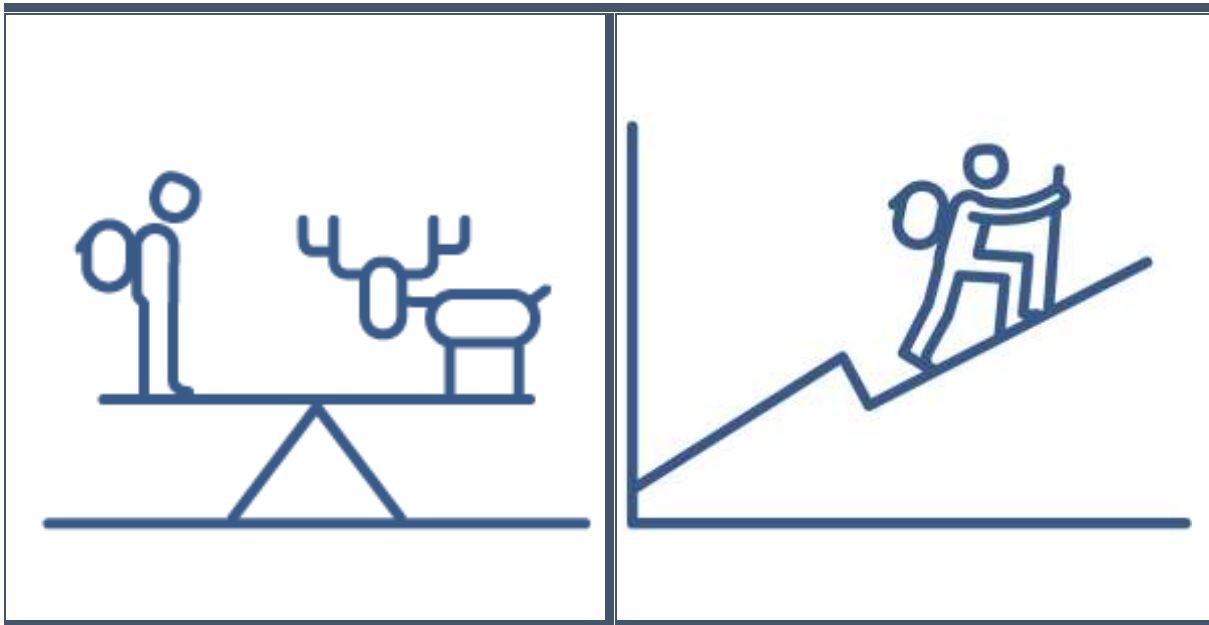
About the scope of the four futures

The basis of the Four Futures Framework⁵, developed by futurologist and professor James Dator, is that all the stories we talk about the future eventually fall into four separate categories (Picture 2.2):

1.Growth	2. Collapse
	
Discipline	Transformation

⁴ Group NAO. Op.cit. 27–37.

⁵ Group NAO. Op.cit. 27–37.



Picture 1. Four Futures Framework in sustainability of Nordic⁶.

Four Futures scenarios provide a useful basis for thinking about tourism sustainability. Although they represent different views, the categories do not have to exclude each other. The advantages of describing scenarios are to imagine an alternative future, adapt them to goals, and begin to think about the means to achieve those goals.

When evaluating future scenarios, there is a tendency to think that the most desirable outcome is a large, changing future. However, there may be aspects of the current trajectory that are the right solution to a particular context. There may be other circumstances where the introduction of new rules or restrictions actually provides the results needed for sustainability. The bottom line is that each scenario helps to identify, formulate, and understand common goals for sustainable tourism and the means to achieve it⁷.

***Growth:** This category continues along the current trajectory of sustainability in Northern tourism, including ongoing economic growth and the expansion of prosperity. ***Fall:** The current trajectory suddenly stops and our paths are broken. The COVID-19 pandemic represents a temporary decline in tourism, an event that has sparked debate about how to restart tourism. While many want to “return to normal,” there are also proponents of a “reconsideration” of tourism after the pandemic.

⁶ <https://pub.norden.org/nord2021-033/#71449>

⁷ Group NAO. 2020. Nordic New Possibilities. Interim report for the project Monitoring Sustainability in Tourism in the Nordics. 23–26.

***Discipline:** New controls, restrictions, rules are introduced to prevent violations of the current order.

***Transformation:** completely new systems and methods of existence and implementation are being introduced and implemented, which means a complete change of trajectory. Destructive innovations and technologies contribute to the emergence of such a scenario.

Methods of monitoring stability

All northern countries are well aware of the need to find a useful reference point for measuring stability. Countries have common ground on the experiences and areas they offer, and therefore countries can be expected to benefit greatly from successful experience and knowledge sharing.

The Scandinavian countries have been world leaders in tourism sustainability for many years. Thus, several of the northern routes have experience, data, capabilities, recognition and brand value as a sustainable route. Sustainability is a major political agenda in the Scandinavian countries and is a priority in the public and private sectors. Nevertheless, all countries have sought to identify meaningful and consistent indicators to monitor sustainable development. This, of course, is important not only for tourism, but also for setting and achieving goals that are relevant in the broader context of an environmentally friendly planet.

In recent decades, the prospects for sustainability in tourism have undergone several paradigm shifts. The changes reflect changes in the overall importance and relevance of environmental and climate issues around the world. There has been a shift from reducing pollution and footprints in tourism to a broader focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and a holistic regenerative review beyond them. This can also be seen as a transition from defensive adaptation to transformative regeneration. It is also a transition to a proactive approach to tourism, where tourism development is no longer an additional activity to the routes, but tourism and sustainability have become part of the integrated agenda of economic development⁸.

This holistic approach can be seen in the Northern Council of Ministers publication “Sustainable Consumption and Production, Analysis of Northern Development Towards SDG12”. The report calls for a more holistic approach to tourism development and the creation of conditions conducive to making tourism a more positive force in economic, environmental and social development.

Conclusion. The Scandinavian countries have made stability a priority in the Joint Vision for the North African region until 2030, and the countries share a common commitment to the UN Stability Goals and the Paris Agreement. In Northern European countries, the tripartite vortex of ‘environmental’, ‘social’ and ‘economic’

⁸ Group NAO. 2020. Nordic New Possibilities. Interim report for the project Monitoring Sustainability in Tourism in the Nordics.

sustainability is a key principle of working with sustainability in tourism. All northern countries use the UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism.

Sustainability has long been a topic of public and political discourse in the northern countries, but has recently begun to be widely used in policy and strategy practice. All northern countries have or are on the verge of publishing national tourism strategies where sustainability is a top priority or a broad agenda.

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