

## Sustainable Heritage tourism in Egypt

**Amr Mohamed Atef**

**PhD Candidate in Heritage & Museum Studies Department, Helwan University**

### **Abstract:**

Egypt enjoys a geographical location, and a moderate climate all the year-round, along with its smooth vast coastlines, and beaches with its unique treasures of coral reefs, providing Egypt with advantages of a competitive edge. Besides cultural and archaeological tourism, many tourism attraction types have come into existence and addressed broader segments of tourists across the world, including recreational tourism, beaches tourism, religious tourism, therapeutic tourism, eco-tourism, sports tourism, golf tourism, safari tourism, desert tourism, yacht tourism, and maritime tourism in addition to festivals tourism, and cultural events and finally conferences and exhibitions tourism [Riham, 2015].

The tourism industry is a major contributor to the gross national product of many nations (Reige and Perry, 2000) and is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Sustainability has become an important topic and concept in relation to tourism planning and development (Inskeep 1991; Southgate & Sharpley 2002; Yuksel, Bramwell & Yuksel 1999). The aim of this research to highlight that there is no tourist attractions related to intangible heritage, natural heritage, within the frame work of sustainable tourism, also tourists are not interested in heritage attractions other than archeological sites, and current tour itineraries are not conducive to heritage and sustainable tourism.

**Keywords:** Tourism; sustainable tourism; management; strategy

**Sustainable tourism can be defined as:**

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12,).

Forms of tourism which meet the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and host communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (sustainable tourism management John Swarbrooke). Sustainable tourism is tourism which develops as quickly as possible, taking account of current accommodation capacity. The local population and the environment. The development of tourism and new investment in the tourism sector should not detract from tourism itself. New tourism facilities should be integrated with the environment (Richards in Bramwell et al. 1996) ATLAS project funded by the European Union).

**Conceptual definition:**

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and sociocultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable

employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

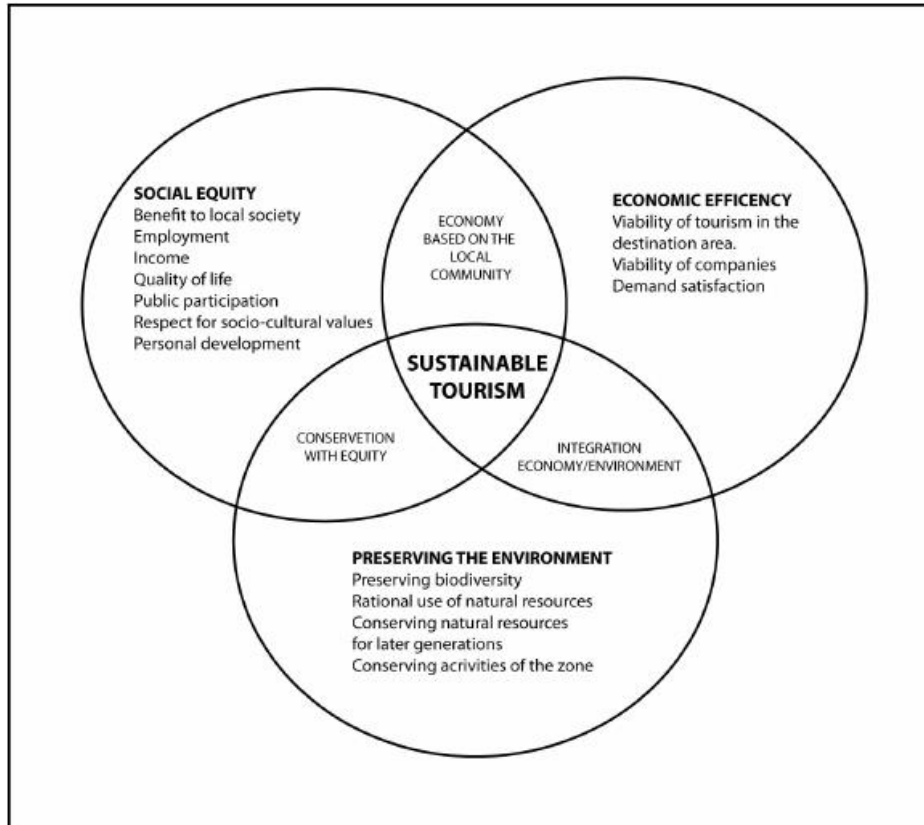


Fig (1) Sustainable tourism development

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them. (Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12).

The notion of suitable tourism emerged from the sustainable development-tourism nexus. Coined in 1987 by Brundtland Commission, "sustainable development" refers to "development that meets the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN 2010). This can only be achieved through protecting and improving the environment, guaranteeing economic benefits and social justice for all; in other words, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability.

As a rapidly expanding sector, tourism exerts growing pressure on its resources base, hence threatening its own viability. In this context, sustainability implies ensuring that tourism activities can be perpetuated in the future while enabling the environment and host societies to benefit from the profits they generate and mitigate the negative impacts they may have. In this sense, sustainable tourism is tourism that "meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future" (UNEP-UNWTO 2005). To this end, it rests upon the three aforementioned principles (environmental, economic and social sustainability) in addition to cultural sustainability of host communities, partnerships between relevant stakeholders to monitor and control tourism impacts and, finally, tourist satisfaction (through positive tourism experiences that raise awareness about conservation issues (UNEP-UNWTO 2005).

This being said, sustainable tourism is not niche form of tourism, rather a "condition" or state all forms of tourism ought to reach. Moreover, sustainable tourism is not synonymous with sustainable development: the former is but a means to achieve the latter. Insofar as it aims to conserve the quality of environmental resources and the cultural authenticity of destinations and host communities, it creates a solid basis for enjoyable tourism experiences which ensure viable revenue streams for local communities, tourism-related activities and local governments.

Furthermore, economic prosperity provides funding for further conservation efforts. Besides stimulating economic development, sustainable tourism also brings social and cultural benefits to local communities in the form of equal access to job employment and learning opportunities, enhanced appreciation of cultural heritage, increased sense of community pride and self-worth as well

as better local control regarding tourism development planning and implementation. It must be pointed out the sustainable tourism and its sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders. These include tourism enterprises, governmental bodies, environmentalists, cultural heritage managers, host societies and tourists.

Although the principles of sustainability are applicable to all types of tourism, they acquire a particular significance in the case of cultural heritage tourism. Let us not forget that this niche form of tourism, as explained throughout the present chapter, is confronted with the problem of tackling two conflicting needs- conservation and commoditization- and the issues they involve, i.e. authenticity, visitor accessibility, interpretation and visitor satisfaction. The principles of

sustainable tourism provide an opportunity to bridge this gap, by linking the conservation of assets' and communities' cultural authenticity to the quality of environmental resources, the economic viability of cultural heritage tourism, market demand for objective authenticity and fulfilling experiences and, finally, partnerships between all relevant stakeholders.

In this context, it must be underlined that cultural heritage tourism holds several characteristics that facilitates its sustainability. On one hand, the demand for quality tourism experiences emphasizes the necessity to preserve and improve the authenticity of the heritage attraction and the quality of its environment. On the other, the interest expressed by heritage tourists for interaction with host communities and local environments further encourages the conversation of local cultural traditions.

Another significant feature is heritage tourists' awareness of the negative impacts tourism, practices may exert on the environment and local communities. As highlighted in the previous context, their keenness to contribute to the society" encourages responsible behavior on their part which helps ensure heritage tourism sustainability. Finally, the increasing demand for

cultural heritage tourism makes this sector one of the most reliable vectors for sustainable development.

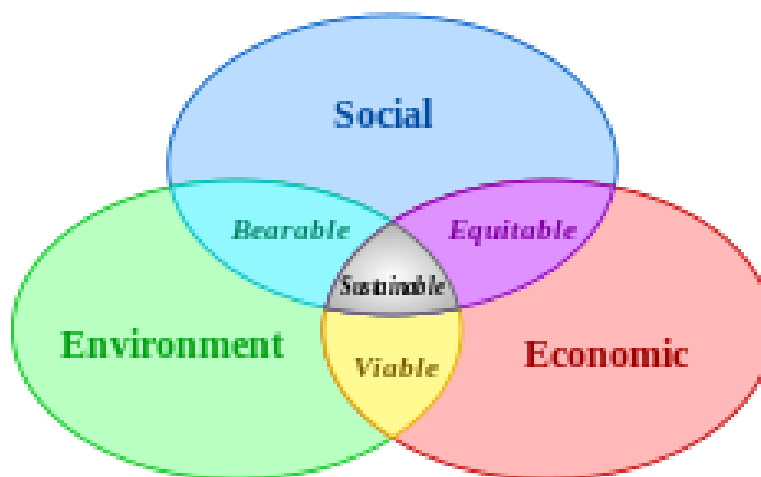


Fig (2) chart of sustainability

**CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM:**

Cultural heritage tourism has a number of objectives that must be met within the context of sustainable development. They can be seen to include:

- The conservation of cultural resources.
- Accurate interpretation of resources.
- Authentic visitor experiences.
- The stimulation of the earned revenues of cultural resources.

We can see therefore, that cultural heritage tourism is not only concerned with the identification, management and protection of heritage values but it must also be involved in understanding the impact of tourism on communities and regions, achieving economic & social benefits, providing financial resources for protection, as well as marketing & promotion.

One of the significant challenges facing cultural heritage tourism is to ensure the successful involvement of a wide range of actors concerned with tourism development and planning. These actors include:

<b>Public Sector:</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Community</b>
Planning Agencies	Hotels	Tourism Groups	Community Groups
Preservation Agencies	Restaurants	Preservation Interests	Community Groups

Marketing Agencies	Transportation	Environmental Groups	Building Owners
Police/Fire Departments	Travel Agents	Poverty Groups	Tenant
Transportation Departments	Tour Operators	Community Banks	
Attractions	Retail Sector	Attractions	

Each urban heritage area should be viewed as a destination with a large number of interdependent activities and concerns. This provides the community, as well as the many stakeholders involved in planning and management, with a more interdisciplinary and comprehensive form of tourism development.

There are a number of obstacles to achieving sustainable heritage tourism destinations. Some major obstacles include the lack of financial resources, poor forms of governance, inappropriate project management processes, ineffective enforcement of regulations, corruption and lack of support for heritage conservation.

**Relation between Heritage, tourism and development:**

The relationship between tourism, heritage and development is a fertile field for study. A large literature about this subject is easily found. The debate about the sustainability of tourism stepped in parallel with the debate on sustainable development: as well as in the case of sustainable development, the main focus was on environmental impacts. Several supranational documents and recommendations was produced: Agenda 21 for travel and tourism Industry, by WTTC et al. (1997) was a milestone in this debate. Inskeep (1991) recognized positive impacts of tourist activities on a destination (conservation of important natural areas, archaeological and historic sites; improvement of environmental quality improvement of infrastructure, increasing environmental awareness, etc.) as well as negative impacts (water, air, noise and visual pollution; ecological disruption; land use problems; risks for archaeological sites, etc.).

An approach more focused on social implications of tourist activities and their relationship with heritage, thus, with population, is emerging with



increasing force, even if, sometimes, the issue remains implicit. In 1964, the “Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments Sites” (ICOMOS, 1964) claims (art. 5) that “the conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose”. Later, in 1990, the “Charter for the protection and management of the archaeological heritage” defended that “the presentation of the archaeological heritage to the general public in an essential method to promoting understanding of the origins and development of modern societies” (ICOMOS, 1990).

In 1999, it was officially defended a “dynamic interaction between tourism and cultural heritage” (ICOMOS, 1999). The social impact of the alliance between tourism and cultural heritage was highlighted by great political leaders like John F. Kennedy, that in 1963 claimed: “Travel has become one of the great forces for peace and understanding in our time. As people move throughout the World and learn to know each other, to understand each other’s customs and to appreciate the qualities of individuals of each nation, we are building a level of international understanding which can sharply improve the atmosphere for world peace”. Still, Ronald Reagan in 1985 declared: “The promotion of travel for pleasure between countries contributes not only to economic growth but to interchange between citizens which helps to achieve understanding and cooperation”. Finally, even the Mahatma Gandhi defended: “I have watched the cultures of all lands blow around my house and other winds have blown the seeds of peace, for travel is the language of peace”.

All these aspirations are institutionalized by UNWTO Manila Declaration on World Tourism and, later, by the first World Conference “Tourism, A Vital Force For Peace” in the year 1988. The main purpose of the conference was debate how the tourism could better contribute for world peace (D’amore, 1988). Again in 1997, UNWTO reaffirmed the importance of social impact of tourism (WTTC et al., 1997). As the Earth Summit and Agenda 21 inspired the tourist sector in the ‘90, in the same way the United Nations Millennium Development Goals are having the same effects, more recently: UNWTO



defends that tourism has an important role to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (UNWTO, 2010).

### **How tourism works in Egypt :**

The publication of Baedeker's Egyptian travel handbook coincided with the publication of the handbook for travellers to Palestine and Syria which came out in 1876. The touristic appeal of the region was enhanced by the growing interest in the Middle East on the part of the colonial powers as well as the ability of these powers to secure safe travel. However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the efforts by Khedive Ismail, to refurbish Egypt's image to attract Europeans, played a major role in stimulating tourism to Egypt. Originally a collection of articles for Lower Egypt with the Fayum and the Peninsula of Sinai, followed in 1892 by a handbook covering Upper Egypt and Nubia, the two parts were combined in the fourth English edition published in 1898 with major revisions by Professor Georg Steindorff of Leipzig University. In the fifth edition, used here (published in 1902), another major force in tourism was evident - the tourist companies. Travelers were advised not to travel on their own "in a country whose customs and language are so entirely different from their own". Tourists were advised to travel with Messrs. Thomas Cook & Son (Ludgate Circus, London) and Messrs. Henry Gaze & Sons (53 Queen Victoria St, London).

Travel agents became an economic force of their own, advertising and promoting travel, and thus spreading tourist-fever. By 1985, tourism had become one of the world's huge business undertakings. In 1982, the number of tourists to all countries numbered 279.9 million persons, yielding as tourist revenues 112,500 million US dollars. Egypt's share was rather modest, with a total of 1.423 million tourists, including 664,000 tourists from Europe and the Americas (0.5 per cent of world tourism), yielding 254 million dollars. However, at the end of the year 2000, the Tourism Ministry in Egypt (Akhbar Al-Adab, 3 December 2000) announced that the number of tourists had increased to 2.5 million in 1993, and had almost doubled in 1999 to reach 4.8 million persons. By 1993, the income from tourism rose to 1.9 billion US dollars, and in 1999 it

reached 3.9 billion US dollars. This placed tourism in the forefront of revenues producing hard currency, contributing 11 per cent of Egypt's GNP and providing 2.2 million job opportunities.

### **Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA)**

The Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) was established in 1981 as an autonomous agency for marketing Egypt as a tourist destination both in the international and domestic markets. It has 21 offices overseas providing possible visitors with information about Egypt.

The promotion of tourism in Egypt has become a key element in the national policy for economic development, buttressed by the creation of a Tourist Development Authority (TDA) and the Egyptian Tourist Agency (ETA). Although there is now a growing emphasis on recreational tourism, the lure of Egypt's monumental legacy is a trump card. The promotional advertisement by the ETA in the popular magazine *Archaeology* (Nov/Dec 2000), adorned with photographic vignettes of Abu Simbel, the Temple of Hatshepsut, and the Sphinx, as well as a felucca, reads:

- there's never been a better time to visit Egypt
- See the land where civilization started
- Seven thousand years of culture, religion and timeless treasures await you
- See where Moses received the Ten Commandments
- Explore the Majesty of the Valley of the Kings
- Diving in the breathtaking waters of the Red Sea
- You can do that in only one place on Earth.

Selling Egypt: Encounters at Khan EL-Khalili (Fekri A. Hassan)

### **Tourism industry and the heritage market:**

Tourism is a major development form, and one of the world's largest industries and although it is not the only activity that occur in historic cities, its relation to heritage and conservation activities is unique; it is a large export industry and earner of foreign exchange, involves millions of people who spends millions,

the largest single item in the world's foreign trade, and is often considered an economic sector with a realistic potential for growth beyond the short term<sup>1</sup>. It also represents a major contribution to national economies.

Defining the tourist industry is difficult. It is not an industry that is grouped into a single heading within the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). The defining feature of tourism is not the product, but the purchaser, the 'tourist'. Most definitions concentrate on the services that a number of different industries, such as the travel industry; hotels and catering; retailing and entertainment provide to tourists. In the context of foreign tourism, the —touristll has been defined by the United Nations as a "visitor staying at least twenty-four hours in a country other than in which his usual place of residence". Domestic tourism, on the other hand, are visits made within a country by residents of that same country. The purpose behind these visits gives more precise definitions, i.e. business tourism, leisure tourism,..., and culture tourism. It is therefore true that "anything that you can do that creates a destination out of your community is piggy-backing upon a major growing sphere of economics."

We can conclude that Planning and managing cultural heritage tourism requires a number of issues to be dealt with. For those involved in heritage preservation the challenge is to understand and work effectively with the tourism industry. For those in the tourism sector there is a need to understand the needs of host communities as well as the principles and concerns that are part of preserving cultural heritage. Tourism will not go away and poorly managed cultural heritage destinations will not only negatively impact local communities but also the industry when heritage resources and values are degraded. The challenge is not to stop tourism but rather for all stakeholders to work together in achieving sustainable planning and management.

### **Conclusion:**

**Key Findings** The concept of sustainable tourism involves the management of all tourism resources in a way that fulfils economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity and ecological diversity (Bramwell & Lane,

1993; WTO, 1996; McKercher, 2003). A large number of studies (Carlsen et al., 2001; Tosun, 2001; Wanhill, 2002; Le et al., 2006) have concluded that a long road is often faced when trying to transform the concept of sustainable tourism from theory into practice because there are many barriers constraining the tourism industry from implementing sustainable practices.

Additionally, it is stated that few stakeholders have a good understanding of what is required to develop successful sustainable tourism because this concept is broad and complex (McKercher, 2003). The adoption of sustainable tourism practices and environmental management more generally will improve the competitiveness and sustainability of a tourism destination.

### References:

- Atef amr (2015): Sustainable tourism in Luxor Heritage and Community Issues, master thesis unpublished French university in Egypt.
- Berry, S. (1994). Conservation, capacity and cash flows—tourism and historic building management. In A. V. Seaton (Ed.), *Tourism: State of the art* (pp. 712–718). Chichester: Wiley.
- Daniel, Y. P. (1996). Tourism dance performances: Authenticity and creativity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(4), 780–797.
- ICOMOS. (1999). Cultural tourism charter. Paris: ICOMOS. <http://www.icomos.org>
- Inskip, E. (1991) *Tourism Planning: An Integrated and Sustainable Development Approach*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

- 
- Jacobs, J., & Gale, F. (1994). Tourism and the protection of aboriginal cultural sites. Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, Special Publication Series No. 10.
  - Southgate, C. & Sharpley, R. (2002). Tourism, development and the environment. In Tourism and development: Concepts and issues. Sharpley, R. & Telfer, D.J. (eds). Cleveland: Channel View Publications 231-262.
  - Urry, J. (1990). The tourist gaze. London: SAGE Publications.
  - Yuksel, F., Bramwell, B. & Yuksel, A. (1999). Stakeholder interviews and tourism planning at Pamukkale, Turkey. *Tourism Management*, 20, 351-360.

---

*Received: April 2021*

*Accepted: June 2021*