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# EXPLORATORY METHODOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT IN TOURIST DESTINATION PLANNING

**Maria Carmen Pardo-López**[1]
**Mónica Cecilia Cortés García**[2]

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The study aims to identify effective planning tools for sustainable tourism destination development, creating a framework that helps planners produce robust, sustainable plans aligned with international standards. This framework bridges the gap between sustainability management and planning, ensuring that tourism plans truly reflect their sustainability goals through actionable content.

**Theoretical Framework:** The study draws on established sustainability certifications like Biosphere, Green Destinations, and toolkits such as the European Tourism Indicators for Sustainability (ETIS). The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria (2013) serves as the core benchmark for evaluating tourism plans.

**Method:** The theoretical approach involved three steps: (1) Confirming the initial hypothesis through literature review, revealing the lack of a formal methodology for sustainable tourism planning. (2) Selecting the GSTC Criteria as the most suitable global system due to their alignment with the SDGs, broad applicability, and credibility. (3) Adapting GSTC management indicators into planning monitoring indicators for effective evaluation.

**Results and Discussion:** The study highlights the absence of clear guidelines for creating actionable sustainable tourism plans. The proposed framework provides tools for destinations to assess the true sustainability of their plans, with a call for further research to validate the framework in different contexts.

**Research Implications:** The study offers two practical applications: 1. Verifying the sustainability of tourism planning documents, and 2. Guiding the creation of plans to ensure sustainability, avoiding shifting these concerns to management.

**Originality/Value:** This study fills a critical gap in sustainable tourism planning by providing a methodology that ensures planning documents meet sustainability standards, offering a fresh contribution to the field.

**Keywords:** Tourism Sustainability, Tourism Planning, Sustainability Indicators, Sustainable Development, GSTC Criteria.

## METODOLOGIA EXPLORATÓRIA PARA A AVALIAÇÃO DA SUSTENTABILIDADE NO PLANEAMENTO DE DESTINOS TURÍSTICOS

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O estudo visa identificar ferramentas para o desenvolvimento de documentos de planeamento turísticos sustentáveis, criando uma metodologia para que ajude os planeadores a produzir planos robustos e sustentáveis, em conformidade com as normas internacionais. Este trabalho preenche a lacuna entre a gestão e o planeamento da sustentabilidade, assegurando que os planos de turismo refletem verdadeiramente os seus objetivos de sustentabilidade.

[1] Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo, Viana do Castelo, Portugal. E-mail: marialopez@estg.ipvc.pt
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0512-3187
[2] Universidad de Lleida, Madrid, State, Spain. E-mail: monica.cortes@nexteducacion.com
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8662-6366

**Referencial Teórico:** O estudo baseia-se em certificações de sustentabilidade estabelecidas, como a Biosphere e a Green Destinations, e em conjuntos de ferramentas como os Indicadores de Sustentabilidade do Turismo Europeu (ETIS) e os Critérios do Conselho Global de Turismo Sustentável (GSTC) (2013).

**Método:** A abordagem teórica envolveu três etapas: (1) Confirmação da hipótese inicial através da revisão da literatura, revelando a falta de uma metodologia formal para o planeamento do turismo sustentável. (2) Seleção dos Critérios GSTC como o sistema global mais adequado devido ao seu alinhamento com os ODS, ampla aplicabilidade e credibilidade. (3) Adaptar os indicadores de gestão GSTC em indicadores de monitorização do planeamento para uma avaliação eficaz.

**Resultados e Discussão:** O estudo oferece duas aplicações práticas: 1. Verificar a sustentabilidade dos documentos de planeamento turístico e 2. Orientar a criação de planos para garantir a sustentabilidade, evitando transferir estas preocupações para a gestão.

**Implicações da Pesquisa:** Este estudo preenche uma lacuna crítica no planeamento do turismo sustentável, oferecendo uma nova contribuição para o campo

**Palavras-chave**: Sustentabilidade do Turismo, Planeamento do Turismo, Indicadores de Sustentabilidade, Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Critérios GSTC.

## METODOLOGÍA EXPLORATORIA PARA LA EVALUACIÓN DE LA SOSTENIBILIDAD EN LA PLANIFICACIÓN DE DESTINOS TURÍSTICOS

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** El estudio pretende identificar herramientas para la elaboración de documentos de planificación turística sostenible, creando una metodología que ayude a los planificadores a producir planes sólidos y sostenibles. Este trabajo tiende un puente entre la gestión y la planificación, garantizando que los planes turísticos reflejen realmente ya sus objetivos de sostenibilidad.

**Marco teórico:** El estudio se basa en certificaciones de sostenibilidad , como Biosphere y Green Destinations, en conjuntos de herramientas como los Indicadores Europeos de Sostenibilidad Turística (ETIS) y los Criterios del Consejo Global de Turismo Sostenible (GSTC) (2013).

**Método:** El planteamiento teórico consta de tres etapas: (1) Confirmación de la hipótesis inicial a través de la revisión bibliográfica, revelando la falta de una metodología formal para la planificación del turismo sostenible. (2) Selección de los Criterios del GSTC como el sistema global más adecuado debido a su alineación con los ODS, amplia aplicabilidad y credibilidad. (3) Adaptación de los indicadores de gestión del GSTC a indicadores de seguimiento de la planificación para una evaluación eficaz.

**Resultados y discusión:** El estudio destaca la ausencia de directrices claras para crear planes de turismo sostenible viables. El marco propuesto proporciona herramientas para que los destinos evalúen la verdadera sostenibilidad de sus planes, y hace un llamamiento a que se realicen más investigaciones para validar el marco en diferentes contextos.

**Implicaciones de la investigación:** El estudio ofrece dos aplicaciones prácticas: 1. Verificar la sostenibilidad de los documentos de planificación turística y 2. Orientar la creación de planes para garantizar la sostenibilidad, evitando trasladar estas preocupaciones a la gestión.

**Originalidad/valor:** Este estudio llena un vacío crítico en la planificación del turismo sostenible al proporcionar una metodología que garantiza que los documentos de planificación cumplan con los estándares de sostenibilidad, ofreciendo una nueva contribución al campo.

**Palabras clave:** Sostenibilidad Turística, Planificación Turística, Indicadores de Sostenibilidad, Desarrollo Sostenible, Criterios GSTC.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many destinations—across various scales, such as municipalities, regions, and nations—and organizations, including destination management organizations (DMOs) and destination management companies (DMCs), have attempted to develop sustainable tourism planning documents (Ramos *et al.*, 2021; SNAC, 2016; Belo Horizonte, 2012; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2018). However, there is no consensus on the minimum standards that a planning document must meet to be truly sustainable. The lack of standardized guidelines and verification processes often leaves the effectiveness and sustainability of proposed actions uncertain. This absence of a well-defined methodology for drafting and implementing sustainable tourism planning documents represents a significant gap that this study aims to address, thus highlighting the originality of this work.

Meanwhile, numerous certifications have emerged to help destinations achieve a sustainable tourism label (e.g., Biosphere, Green Destinations—Costa, Rodrigues & Gomes, 2019). From a management perspective, tourism destinations can pursue sustainability through various means, such as certifications (Biosphere, EarthCheck), guidelines (e.g., GSTC indicators), and toolkits (e.g., ETIS). While these approaches provide a solid foundation for achieving long-term sustainability by shaping strategies, there has been little focus on developing planning indicators for drafting essential documents tailored to the desired tourism development in each case.

This paper first discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study, followed by the proposed methodology. It then elaborates on the method itself and concludes with tables of potential criteria for the sustainable planning of tourist destinations.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The need for integrating sustainability into tourism planning has been a consistent theme in the literature over the last 25 years (Manning *et al.*, 2000; Padin, 2012; Queiroz & Rastrollo-Horrillo, 2015; Morpeth & Yan, 2015; Diaz & Rodríguez, 2016; González-Reverté, 2019; Sharma, 2019; Štreimikienė *et al.*, 2020; Santos, Veiga & Aguas, 2022). However, a practical and straightforward methodology for planning does not yet exist—only methodologies for destination management.

Sustainable tourism destinations require improved planning processes that account for environmental sensitivities and local values, resulting in plans that respect key considerations

and accommodate various carrying capacities (Manning et al, 2000).

As sustainable tourism planning aims to achieve economic growth, social equity, and environmental stability while balancing environmental, economic, and cultural aspects (Padin, 2012), it must integrate these dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability in destinations. Hypothetically, effective sustainable tourism planning would lead to truly sustainable tourism destinations. Key factors include balancing environmental, economic, and cultural development, to ensure economic growth and social equity.

As stated by Soteriou & Coccossis (2010), tourism organizations face challenges in incorporating sustainability into strategic planning, hindered by internal and external constraints. While destination management can advance towards sustainability through several alternatives such as the various certifications (e.g., Biosphere, Green Destination) (Costa, Rodrigues & Gomes, 2019) and toolkits (e.g., ETIS – European Tourism Indicators for Sustainability at EU level) (Navarro et al, 2020), or guidelines from different national or international organizations, sustainable tourism planning still faces significant challenges. Internal organizational barriers and external factors limit strategic planning's potential to contribute substantially to sustainability.

Sustainable tourism research has evolved towards studying change, social and cultural aspects, and responsible governance models. However, further progress requires globally recognized measurement indicators and policy frameworks as highlighted by Alonso-Muñoz *et al.* (2022). A decade earlier, Lozano-Oyola *et al.* (2012) developed an indicator system for evaluating sustainable tourism at cultural destinations, providing guidelines for applying these tools in tourism planning and aiding in the formulation of action plans, short-term strategies, and benchmarking practices. This remains the only instance identified in literature where indicators have been applied specifically to tourism planning (but only for cultural destinations). Even this example serves more as a proposal for sustainable tourism indicators necessary to objectively measure sustainability levels rather than as actionable criteria for drafting tourism planning documents.

In this context, the GSTC engages in initiatives that encourage planning but do not necessarily serve as a universal tool for destinations to develop their sustainability plans according to GSTC criteria. The first example is the "Guidelines for National Government Authorities to Apply the GSTC Framework to Public Policy for Tourism Development & Promotion." Through this, the GSTC supports public sector authorities in creating broadly applicable policies and institutional frameworks that ensure sustainability in tourism and destination management. However, as previously mentioned, this approach is not entirely

accessible or universal. To access the full range of GSTC resources, an organization must first become a GSTC member and publicly commit to improving sustainable tourism policies and practices according to international standards. Additionally, they need to work with the GSTC to develop a customized plan (GSTC, n.d.).

The second example is the "Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D)," which is based on the GSTC Criteria for Destinations. It was developed by the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), under the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, in 2019. The JSTS-D includes 47 criteria with Japan-specific features. This effort is limited, as it is specifically designed for destinations within Japan (GSTC, 2021).

The literature clearly demonstrates that developing sustainable tourism policies and performing adequate destination management is critical for tourism destination success, impacting tourists' experiences, purchasing behavior, and loyalty (Santos, Veiga, Santos & Águas, 2022).

Finally, according to UN Tourism, sustainability indicators are quantitative tools designed to facilitate information analysis and assessment, thereby enabling managers to make informed decisions (UN Tourism, 1995). Thus, it is evident from the literature that a similar system -a composite of indicators- is needed to propose a sustainable planning methodology for tourist destinations.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for this study, which is structured as a theoretical essay. The methodology comprises three key steps (see Figure 1), each designed to build a robust framework for sustainable tourism planning:

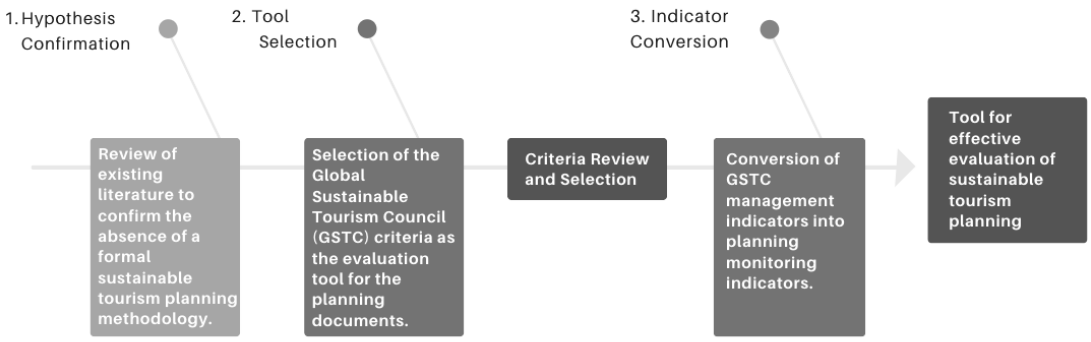
a) confirmation of the Initial Hypothesis: The first step was to confirm the initial hypothesis through a literature analysis. This step involved reviewing existing literature to establish the absence of a formal methodology that assures sustainable tourism planning;
b) identification of the most suitable existing tool to base the indicator battery and do the conversion: The second step was to identify the most suitable global system to serve as the basis for this exercise. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria were chosen due to their strong alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), broad applicability to various destination types, public and free accessibility, non-commercial interests, and role as an accrediting entity for certifying organizations;

c) conversion of GSTC Management Indicators into Planning Monitoring Indicators: The third step involved converting the GSTC management indicators into planning monitoring indicators. This conversion ensures that the indicators can be effectively used to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of sustainable tourism planning effort (see in chapter 4 criteria followed to identify these as the best basis to follow).

**Figure 1**

*Research Methodology for effective evaluation of sustainable tourism planning.*




The purpose of this document is to create a framework that enables tourism planners to develop robust sustainable planning documents, adhering to these recognized international standards. This framework aims to provide a clear and structured approach, ensuring that planning documents are both actionable and effective in promoting sustainable tourism.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, focusing on the development of a methodological proposal for sustainable tourism destination planning. The proposal is based on the identification and conversion of management indicators, specifically those developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), into planning indicators.

## 4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOST SUITABLE BASIS FOR CONVERSION

This first section outlines the selection of the GSTC Criteria as the most suitable basis for this conversion. The criteria were chosen due to their strong alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), broad applicability to various types of destinations, public accessibility, non-commercial interests, and their role as an accrediting entity. This selection ensures that the indicators used for planning not only promote sustainable tourism but also contribute to wider global sustainability objectives.

a) alignment with sustainable development goals (SDGs): The GSTC Criteria are strongly aligned with the SDGs, ensuring that sustainable tourism practices contribute to broader global sustainability objectives, such as those found in Biosphere and Green Destinations;
b) broad applicability: The GSTC Criteria are applicable to various types of destinations, whether urban, rural, coastal, or otherwise, making them highly versatile;
c) public and free accessibility: These criteria are publicly available and free to access, promoting transparency and encouraging widespread adoption;
d) non-commercial interests: The GSTC operates without commercial interests, focusing solely on promoting and implementing sustainable tourism practices;
e) role as an accrediting entity: The GSTC functions as an accrediting entity for certifying organizations, ensuring that certified entities meet high standards of sustainability.

The transformation of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria for destination management into indicators for destination planning has resulted in the creation of four blocks of evidence. These blocks cover:

a) destination management: Indicators focusing on the effective management and governance of the destination;
b) economic dimension of tourism sustainability: Indicators addressing the economic impacts and benefits of tourism, ensuring economic viability and equitable distribution of gains;
c) environmental dimension of tourism sustainability: Indicators related to the environmental impacts of tourism, emphasizing the protection and sustainable use of natural resources;
d) socio-cultural dimension of tourism sustainability: Indicators that consider the social and cultural impacts of tourism, promoting the preservation of cultural heritage and the well-being of local communities.

These four blocks comprise a total of 112 indicators, which serve two main purposes:

a) monitoring sustainability in planning documents: These indicators assess the sustainability of existing tourism planning documents, ensuring they meet the required sustainability criteria;
b) toolkit for developing planning documents with sustainability: The indicators also guide the creation of new sustainable tourism planning documents, providing a comprehensive toolkit for embedding sustainability into the planning process.

By offering a dual-purpose tool for monitoring and creating sustainable plans, this methodological proposal addresses the practical needs of tourism planners while promoting long-term sustainability at the destination level.

## 4.2 CONVERSION OF GSTC MANAGEMENT CRITERIA INTO A PLANNING AND VERIFICATION CHECKLIST

This phase involves converting the established management criteria into a practical checklist for both planning and verification purposes. The checklist serves as a tool to ensure that all essential criteria are consistently applied throughout the project lifecycle, providing a clear framework for assessing progress and compliance with the objectives of the planning documents.

As there is no existing methodology for sustainable planning tools for tourist destinations, nor for the conversion of management indicators into planning criteria, this phase has been supported by two elements: 1, the curriculum of both authors in the planning of tourist destinations, both at municipal, regional and transnational levels, and this experience has been the solid basis for the screening of valid indicators and their conversion. Secondly, informal discussions have been generated with professionals in the sector (mostly consultants) to ensure the applicability of the indicators.

This section develops the methodological proposal based on the conversion of sustainability indicators for tourism destination management, as developed by the GSTC. The choice of using GSTC indicators is justified by the criteria explained in the previous section.

The work involved analyzing each criterion and the proposed management indicators. Some of these indicators are suitable for planning, while others are not, which is why the numbers may not match. Additionally, there are criteria that may not have been addressed in the planning document but are already being measured or acted upon by the destination. In such

cases, this should not be viewed as a penalty. Therefore, many indicators are phrased as: "Does the document have, or does the destination already have...?".

**Figure 2**

*Proposal of Conversion of GSTC Management Criteria into a Planning and Verification Checklist for Section A: Sustainable Management.*

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION A: Sustainable management** | | | |
| **A(a) Management structure and framework** | | | |
| A1 Destination management responsibility The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector, public sector and civil society. This group has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of socio- economic, cultural and environmental issues. The group is adequately funded, works with a range of bodies in delivering destination management, has access to sufficient staffing (including personnel with experience in sustainability) and follows principles of sustainability and transparency in its operations and transactions. | a. Documentary evidence showing relevant make-up and responsibilities of the group. b. A financial plan and budget showing current and future funding sources. c. Evidence of links and engagement with other bodies. d. Records of permanent staff and contracted personnel, indicating relevant experience. e. Management guidelines and processes, which demonstrate awareness and adherence to sustainability principles and transparency in operations and letting of contracts. | 16, 17 | 1. Is there an organization, department, group, or committee clearly designated and recognized as responsible for the management of the tourist destination in the planning document (or its proposals)? |
| | | | 2. Was there active and representative participation from the private sector, public sector, and civil society in the development of the document? |
| | | | 3. Are the responsibilities and functions of this organization in relation to the management of socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental issues related to tourism clearly defined? |
| | | | 4. Does the document or its proposals indicate evidence that this organization is focused (or should focus) on the sustainability of the destination? |
| | | | 5. Does this organization already work (or does the document propose that it should work) in collaboration with a variety of governmental or non-governmental bodies in the comprehensive management of the destination? In other words, is there a proposal to move from government to governance of tourism at the destination? |
| | | | 6. Are measures being implemented to periodically evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the actions taken regarding sustainability in the management of the destination? In other words, is monitoring being done in this area, or does the document propose that this be done? |
| A2 Destination management strategy and action plan The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination management strategy and action plan that is publicly available, is suited to its scale, was developed with stakeholder engagement and is based on sustainability principles. The strategy includes an identification and assessment of tourism assets and considers socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and risks. The strategy relates to and influences wider sustainable development policy and action in the destination. | a. A published document setting out the current destination strategy and action. b. The strategy/plan clearly visible and available online. c. Evidence of stakeholder consultation, meetings etc. in developing the plan. d. Reference to sustainability principles and an assessment of assets, issues and risks, contained in the strategy and action plan. e. Specific references in the strategy/action plan to wider sustainable development policy (including pursuit of the SDGs), and vice versa. | 17 | 1. Is the destination's planning document publicly available? |
| | | | 2. Does the destination's planning document have a duration of several years? |
| | | | 3. Is the proposed strategy (or action proposals) based on principles of sustainability? |
| | | | 4. Are the action proposals linked or justified based on the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)? Or based on a higher-level geographic tourism sustainability strategy? |
| | | | 5. Were socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental problems and risks considered in the diagnosis prior to the development of the strategy? |
| | | | 6. Is there evidence that the action proposals influence policies? |
| | | | 7. Are there specific references in the planning document to a broader sustainable development policy (simply the SDGs)? |
| A3 Monitoring and reporting The destination is implementing a system to monitor and respond to socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and impacts arising from tourism. Actions and outcomes are regularly monitored, evaluated and publicly reported. The monitoring system is periodically reviewed. | a. Specific quantifiable socio-economic, cultural and environmental indicators and targets identified. b. Measurement against these indicators, with results recorded and publicised at least annually. c. Written evidence of monitoring and reporting of actions and outcomes. d. Previous reviews of monitoring system and schedule for future reviews. | 12 | 1. Have specific monitoring indicators related to sustainability in the economic pillar been identified? |
| | | | 2. Have specific monitoring indicators related to relevant cultural aspects been identified? |
| | | | 3. Have specific monitoring indicators related to relevant environmental aspects been identified? |
| | | | 4. Are the monitoring indicators quantifiable and clearly measurable? |
| | | | 5. Is periodic measurement of the monitoring indicators being carried out? |
| | | | 6. Has a timeline been established for future reviews of the monitoring system? |

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION A: Sustainable management** | | | |
| **A(b) Stakeholder engagement** | | | |
| A4 Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards The destination regularly informs tourismrelated enterprises about sustainability issues and encourages and supports them in making their operations more sustainable. The destination promotes the adoption of sustainability standards, promoting the application of GSTC-I Recognized standards and GSTC-I Accredited certification schemes for tourism enterprises, where available. The destination publicizes a list of sustainability certified enterprises. | a. Evidence of regular communication of sustainability issues to tourism-related businesses (Media, meetings, direct contact etc.). b. Sustainability support and advice to tourism related business – available and promoted. c. Number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards (and whether GSTC recognised/accredited), with targets for wider outreach. d. Evidence of promotion of certification schemes. e. List of tourism-related certified enterprises, kept up to date. | 12, 17 | 1. Does the document propose (or has the destination already adopted) recognized sustainability standards (whether or not they are certifications)? |
| | | | 2. Does the document propose or support (or does the destination already have) any sustainable tourism certification for tourism businesses? |
| | | | 3. Does the document consider promoting or supporting more certified businesses - or those that decide to implement sustainability toolkits? Or does the destination already do this? |
| A5 Resident engagement and feedback The destination enables and promotes public participation in sustainable destination planning and management. Local communities' aspirations, concerns and satisfaction with tourism sustainability and destination management are regularly monitored and publicly reported, and action is taken in response to them. The destination has a system to enhance local understanding of sustainable tourism opportunities and challenges and to build the capacity of communities to respond. | a. Evidence of the promotion and facilitation of public participation in destination planning/management. b. Information on the type and level of such participation. c. Surveys of residents and other systematic feedback mechanisms, covering tourism issues. d. Evidence of action taken in response to residents' feedback. e. Programme of information, education and training on tourism provided for residents. | 17, 11 | 1. Does the document propose periodically monitoring indicators related to the aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction of local communities regarding tourism sustainability and destination management? Or does the destination already do this? |
| | | | 2. Does the document establish channels (or do these already exist according to the document itself) for local communities to express their opinions and suggestions on the management of the tourist destination continuously? |
| A6 Visitor engagement and feedback The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction with the quality and sustainability of the destination experience and, if necessary, to take action in response. Visitors are informed about sustainability issues in the destination and the part that they can play in addressing them. | a. Visitor surveys (and other feedback mechanisms) – carried out and reported. b. Surveys and feedback includes visitor reaction to sustainability issues. c. Evidence of actions taken in response to visitor survey/feedback findings. d. Examples of visitor information that covers sustainability issues and how to respond to them | 11, 12 | 1. Are there, or are there proposed in the document, monitoring indicators of visitor satisfaction with the sustainability of the experience at the destination? Surveys, interviews, or other methods. |
| | | | 2. Is it proposed (or is it already being done) to publish the information collected on visitor satisfaction? |
| | | | 3. Does the document propose any actions (or does the destination already carry them out) to inform or raise awareness among tourists about local and global sustainability issues? |
| | | | 4. Does the document contain any actions (or does the destination already carry them out) to motivate visitors to participate in improving sustainability? |
| A7 Promotion and information Promotion and visitor information material about the destination is accurate with regard to its products, services, and sustainability claims. Marketing messages and other communications reflect the destination's values and approach to sustainability and treat local communities and natural and cultural assets with respect. | a. Current information and promotional material with appropriate content. b. A process exists for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of destination promotion and information. c. Evidence of consultation with local communities and environmental and cultural bodies on communications content and delivery. | 11, 12 | 1. Does the document propose (or does the destination already do this) that promotional material should accurately reflect the destination's sustainability vocation? |
| | | | 2. Is a commitment to the preservation and care of the destination's natural and cultural resources considered in the promotion and information strategy? Or does the destination already consider it this way? |

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION A: Sustainable management** | | | |
| **A(c) Managing pressure and change** | | | |
| A8 Managing visitor volumes and activities The destination has a system for visitor management which is regularly reviewed. Action is taken to monitor and manage the volume and activities of visitors, and to reduce or increase them as necessary at certain times and in certain locations, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultural heritage and environment. | a. The destination management strategy and action plan addresses seasonality and spread of visitation. b. Variation in visitor volumes throughout the year is monitored, including in the most visited locations. c. Impacts of visitor volumes and activities are identified through observation and community and stakeholder feedback. d. Actions taken to manage visitor flows and impacts. e. Marketing strategy and selection of target markets takes account of visit patterns, the impact of activities and destination needs. | 11,12 | 1. Does the document address seasonality and the dispersion of visitors? Or does the destination already have strategies to address these issues? |
| | | | 2. Does the document propose how to control the variation in visitor volume throughout the year? Or does the destination already have a strategy to manage this? |
| | | | 3. Does the document propose how to mitigate or eliminate the impacts of visitor volume and activities? Or does the destination already do this? |
| | | | 4. Does the document propose how to manage visitor flows where they are excessive? Or does the destination already take care of this? |
| A9 Planning regulations and development control The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies which control the location and nature of development, require environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. Regulations also apply to operations, including property rental and concessions for tourism purposes. The guidelines, regulations and policies were created with public participation and are widely communicated and enforced. | a. Specific policies/regulations/ guidelines which control development – documented and identified by title and date. b. Impact assessment requirements are set out, covering environmental, economic, and sociocultural impacts, at sufficient scale to address long term issues for the destination. c. Specific regulations on property rental and operation for tourism, with evidence of their application and enforcement. d. Evidence of public participation in the development of policies/regulations/guidelines. e. Evidence of consultation with, and consent from indigenous people or minority ethnic groups when tourism development has been proposed or has occurred in their territories. f. Evidence of communication and enforcement of the policies/regulations/guidance, at planning, development and implementation stage. | 9, 11 | 1. Does the document propose (or does the destination already have - or are there at a higher level) specific regulations regarding the rental and operation of properties for tourism? |
| | | | 2. Did the document involve public participation (residents, business owners, universities, unions, experts - at least two -) in its development (not just public explanation of the methodology but actual participation)? |
| A10 Climate change adaptation The destination identifies risks and opportunities associated with climate change. Climate change adaptation strategies are pursued for the siting, design, development and management of tourism facilities. Information on predicted climate change, associated risks and future conditions is provided for residents, businesses and visitors. | a. The destination management strategy and action plan identifies and addresses climate issues. b. Regulations, guidelines and zoning for tourism development and activities accommodate the consequences of climate change. c. A climate risk assessment, covering current and future risks – undertaken and made publicly available. d. Evidence of consideration of impact on, and contribution of, local ecosystems to climate change adaptation. e. Information on climate change that has been made publicly available. | 13 | 1. Does the action plan strategy identify and address climate-related issues? That is, does it propose (or does the destination already have) actions to combat (or prevent) the issues arising from (or potentially arising from) climate change? |
| A11 Risk and crisis management The destination has a risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. Procedures and resources are established for implementing the plan and it is regularly updated. | a. A documented risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan for tourism in the destination. b. The plan recognises a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, terrorism, health, resource depletion, and others appropriate to the location. c. Communication procedures identified for use during and after an emergency. d. Programme for local delivery of information and training on risk and crisis management. | 11, 16 | 2. Is a risk reduction plan, crisis management, and emergency response for tourism at the destination proposed in the document (or already in place)? |
| | | | 3. Does the plan recognize the potential of a wide range of risks, such as natural disasters, terrorism, health issues, resource depletion, etc. (at least two)? |

**Figure 3**

*Proposal of Conversion of GSTC Management Criteria into a Planning and Verification Checklist for Section B: Socio-economic sustainability.*

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION B: Socio-economic sustainability** | | | |
| **B(a) Delivering local economic benefits** | | | |
| B1 Measuring the economic contribution of tourism<br>The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported. Appropriate measures may include levels of visitor volume, visitor expenditure, employment and investment and evidence on the distribution of economic benefits. | a. Programme of economic data gathering.<br>b. Annual reports on the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism in the destination.<br>c. Data covering a range of measures of economic impact (e.g. volume, expenditure, employment, investment and spread of economic benefit in the destination). | 1, 8 , 9 | 1. Does the document indicate the economic contribution of tourism to the destination or propose its monitoring? |
| | | | 2. Are there data in the document on the number of visitors arriving at the tourist destination, or does the document propose monitoring this indicator? |
| | | | 3. Does the document detail the expenditures made by visitors during their stay at the destination, or does it propose monitoring this? |
| | | | 4. Does the planning document detail the extent to which tourism generates local employment, or does it propose measuring this indicator? |
| | | | 5. Does the document indicate values or projections for investment in the destination's tourism industry, or does it propose measuring this? |
| | | | 6. Does the document contain historical data for analyzing and evaluating trends in tourism's economic contribution? |
| B2 Decent work and career opportunities<br>The destination encourages and supports career opportunities and training in tourism. The destination's tourism enterprises commit to providing equality of opportunity for local employment, training and advancement, a safe and secure working environment, and a living wage for all. | a. Provision of relevant skills training programmes/courses, available locally. b. Statements of commitment by tourism enterprises to the provision of decent work/ career opportunities. c. Training and employment opportunities promoted to and taken up by local people, including women, young people, minorities and people with disabilities. d. Channels for checking working conditions and receiving/handling grievances (e.g. involvement of labour unions). | **8, 5, 4, 10** | 1. Does the document propose the launch of programs or courses to develop skills relevant to the tourism industry at the destination? |
| | | | 2. Does the document separately propose specific training and employment opportunities targeted at local communities, including women, youth, minorities, and people with disabilities? |
| B3 Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade The destination encourages the retention of tourism spending in the local economy through supporting local enterprises, supply chains and sustainable investment. It promotes the development and purchase of local sustainable products based on fair trade principles and that reflect the area's nature | a. Advice, finance or other support – available in the destination for tourism-related SMEs.<br>b. Assistance with market access for local tourism- related SMEs.<br>c. Action to encourage and assist local tourism enterprises to purchase goods and services locally.<br>d. Initiatives to help local farmers, artisans and food producers to engage in the tourism value chain.<br>e. Local produce and crafts identified, promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination. | **8, 12** | 1. Does the document propose providing advice, financing, or other forms of support to SMEs in the tourism sector? |
| | | | 2. Does the document include proposals to assist in facilitating market access for tourism SMEs, or is the destination already working in this direction? |
| | | | 3. Does the document propose initiatives to help local farmers, producers, and artisans benefit from tourism, or is the destination already doing this? |
| | | | 4. Does the document propose actions to identify (if necessary), promote, and make local products and crafts available to visitors at the destination, or is the destination already doing this? |

**Figure 4**

*Proposal of Conversion of GSTC Management Criteria into a Planning and Verification Checklist for Section C: Cultural sustainability.*

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION C: Cultural sustainability** | | | |
| **C(a) Protecting cultural heritage** | | | |
| C1 Protection of cultural assets The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve cultural assets, including built heritage and cultural landscapes. | a. Lists of cultural assets, including evaluation and indication of vulnerability.<br>b. Programme of rehabilitation and conservation of assets.<br>c. Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of cultural assets. | 11 | 1. Does the document inventory, propose to inventory, or reference the existence of an inventory of cultural assets in the tourist destination? |
| | | | 2. Does the document propose actions or reference existing measures for the conservation, maintenance, etc., of cultural assets, such as heritage? |
| | | | 3. Does the document propose mechanisms (or do they already exist) to use tourism-generated revenue (fees, taxes) to support the conservation of cultural assets? |
| C2 Cultural artefacts The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts. The laws are enforced and publicly communicated, including to tourism enterprises and visitors. | a. Reference to relevant laws relating to historical artefacts pertaining in the destination (title, date).<br>b. Evidence of communication of relevant laws to tourism enterprises and visitors.<br>c. Evidence of enforcement of relevant laws. | **11** | Not Included |
| C3 Intangible heritage The destination supports the celebration and protection of intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions, arts, music, language, gastronomy and other aspects of local identity and distinctiveness. The presentation, replication and interpretation of living culture and traditions is sensitive and respectful, seeks to involve and benefit local communities, and provides visitors with an authentic and genuine experience. | a. Identification and listing of intangible cultural heritage.<br>b. Examples of celebration and visitor experiences of intangible cultural heritage (events, distinctive products etc.).<br>c. Evidence of involvement of local and indigenous communities in developing and delivering visitor experiences based on intangible cultural heritage.<br>d. Feedback from visitors and local communities on delivery of intangible heritage experiences. | **11,12** | 1. Does the document inventory, propose to inventory, or reference the existence of an inventory of intangible cultural heritage in the tourist destination? |
| | | | 2. Does the document propose specific actions for celebrations or events that represent the destination's intangible cultural heritage, or does the destination already have them? |
| | | | 3. Does the document propose (or does the destination already have) community involvement in developing experiences related to intangible heritage? |
| | | | 4. Does the document propose (or does the destination already have) measures to ensure accessibility (for visitors and residents) to natural and cultural sites highlighted in the document as important resources/attractions/tourism products? |
| **C4 Traditional access** The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites. | a. Monitoring of accessibility to natura<br>l and cultural sites for the local community. b. Evidence of engagement with the local community regarding traditional access.<br>c. Specific action to protect and/or rehabilitate local community access. | **11** | 1. Does the document propose (or does the destination already have) measures to ensure accessibility (for visitors and residents) to the natural and cultural sites highlighted in the document as important resources/attractions/tourism products? |
| | | | 2. Is there a commitment, or is one proposed, to the local community regarding access to these sites? |
| | | | 3. Does the destination have, or does the document propose, specific actions to protect and/or restore local community access to these sites? |
| C5 Intellectual property The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals. | a. Reference to laws on intellectual property pertaining in the destination (title, date).<br>b. Communication of intellectual property rights to tourism stakeholders.<br>c. Evidence that intellectual property rights are protected in the development of cultural experiences for visitors. | **16** | Not Included |

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION C: Cultural sustainability** | | | |
| **C(b) Visiting cultural sites** | | | |
| C6 Visitor management at cultural sites The destination has a system for the management of visitors within and around cultural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behaviour at sensitive sites and cultural events are made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit. | a. Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on cultural sites, with results shared across the destination.<br>b. Evidence of action to manage tourism-related impacts in or around cultural sites.<br>c. Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites and cultural events and periodic monitoring of compliance.<br>d. A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at cultural sites.<br>e. Provision of training for guides. | **11, 12** | 1. Does the document make proposals (or does the destination already have) a specific system for managing visitors at cultural sites? |
| | | | 2. Does the document mention whether care is taken with the characteristics, capacity, and sensitivity of cultural sites to optimize visitor flow and minimize negative impacts? |
| | | | 3. Does the destination have, or does the document propose, rules for visitor behavior at sensitive sites or cultural events? |
| | | | 4. Is there a proposal for monitoring (or is this already done) visitor behavior at sensitive sites and cultural events? |
| | | | 5. Is there (or is there a proposal for) a code of practice for operators and tour guides, or any other commitment from them for managing visitors at cultural sites? |
| | | | 6. Does the destination provide, or does the document propose, training for guides at the destination? |
| C7 Site interpretation Accurate interpretative material is provided which informs visitors of the significance of the cultural and natural aspects of the sites they visit. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with host community collaboration, and clearly communicated in languages pertinent to visitors and residents. | a. Provision of informative interpretative material on site and in formats that are accessible pre-arrival.<br>b. Evidence that interpretative material has been well researched and is accurate.<br>c. Interpretation material that identifies the significance and sensitivity/fragility of sites.<br>d. Evidence of host community collaboration in preparation of relevant interpretative material.<br>e. Interpretative material available in relevant languages. | 11, 4 | 1. Does the document describe (or propose) the provision of interpretive material in an accessible format before visitors arrive? |
| | | | 2. Does the destination already provide (or is it proposed in the document) information in promotional material that explains the sensitivity/fragility of the sites? |
| | | | 3. Does the document mention (or propose) that the material is available in appropriate languages for both residents and visitors? |

**Figure 5**

*Proposal of Conversion of GSTC Management Criteria into a Planning and Verification Checklist for Section D: Cultural sustainability.*

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION D: Environmental sustainability** | | | |
| **D(a) Conservation of natural heritage** | | | |
| D1 Protection of sensitive environments The destination has a system to monitor, measure and respond to the impacts of tourism on the natural environment, conserve ecosystems, habitats and species, and prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species. | a. List of natural heritage sites and assets, indicating type, conservation status and vulnerability.<br>b. Programmes to conserve biodiversity and natural heritage.<br>c. Programmes to eradicate and control invasive species.<br>d. Action to identify, monitor and mitigate tourism impacts on biodiversity and natural heritage.<br>e. Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of natural assets.<br>f. Communications with visitors and enterprises on reducing spread of alien species. | 14, 15 | 1. Are there (or are specific measures proposed) to monitor and measure the impacts of tourism on the natural environment of the destination? |
| | | | 2. Is there an inventory (or does the document provide) of the natural heritage? |
| | | | 3. Are there programs (or does the document propose them) for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at the destination? |
| | | | 4. Are there mechanisms to use tourism revenue to support the conservation of natural assets at the destination? |
| D2 Visitor management at natural sites The destination has a system for the management of visitors within and around natural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behaviour at sensitive sites are made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit. | a. Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on natural sites, with results shared across the destination.<br>b. Evidence of action to manage and mitigate tourism-related impacts in or around natural sites.<br>c. Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites, and periodic monitoring of compliance.<br>d. A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at natural sites.<br>e. Cooperation with local conservation bodies to identify environmental risks associated with tourism and measures to reduce them.<br>f. Provision of training for guides. | 14, 15 | 1. Is there monitoring of visitor flows at natural sites (or is this proposed in the document)? |
| | | | 2. Are specific actions proposed (or already in place) to manage and mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on natural sites? |
| | | | 3. Is there already, or is it proposed, the publication of guidelines for expected visitor behavior at naturally sensitive sites? |
| | | | 4. Are actions proposed (or already in place) to ensure that tour guides and operators follow a code of best practices for managing visitors at natural sites? |
| | | | 5. Is there, or is it proposed, some form of collaboration with local institutions to identify or address risks associated with tourism at natural sites? |
| | | | 6. Are there proposals (or existing ones) for training tour guides regarding the points mentioned above? |
| D3 Wildlife interaction The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for wildlife interactions. Interactions with free roaming wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, are non-invasive and responsibly managed to avoid adverse impacts on the animals concerned and on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild. | a. Reference (title, date) to international, national and local laws that apply in the destination regarding interaction with wildlife.<br>b. Endorsement of international standards for wildlife viewing for both marine and terrestrial species.<br>c. Distribution of a code of practice for wildlife interaction, including viewing, which reflects international standards.<br>d. System for checking compliance with regulations, and code of practice amongst tourism operations.<br>e. Actions to monitor wildlife wellbeing and minimize disturbance, in locations where interactions occur.<br>f. Provision of information to visitors on harmful wildlife interaction, such as touching and feeding. | **14, 15** | 1. Is there any reference to the adoption of international standards for wildlife observation, both in marine and terrestrial environments? |
| | | | 2. Does the document mention or consider any form of verification for compliance with regulations and codes of practice among tourism operations at the destination? |
| | | | 3. Does the document mention providing information to visitors about harmful interactions with wildlife, such as contact or feeding? |

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION D: Environmental sustainability** | | | |
| **D(a) Conservation of natural heritage** | | | |
| D4 Species exploitation and animal welfare The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards that seek to ensure animal welfare and conservation of species (animals, plants and all living organisms). This includes the harvesting or capture, trade, display, and sale of wildlife species and their products. No species of wild animal is acquired, bred or held captive, except by authorized and suitably equipped persons and for properly regulated activities. Housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standards of animal welfare. | a. Reference (title, date) to specific international, national and local laws, standards and guidelines that apply in the destination regarding animal welfare and conservation of species.<br>b. Notification of laws, standards and guidelines to tourism enterprises and guides.<br>c. A system for inspection of the conditions of captive wildlife and domestic animals, including their housing and handling.<br>d. Licensing and checking of qualifications of personnel responsible for captive wildlife.<br>e. Action to promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in the tourism sector and to ensure compliance with it.<br>f. Provision of information to visitors on avoiding trade in endangered species, e.g. in purchase of souvenirs derived from threatened species of wildlife notified by IUCN or CITES.<br>g. Enforcement of legislation to ensure that any hunting activity is part of a scientifically based, properly managed and strictly enforced approach to conservation. | **14, 15, 16** | 1. Is there consideration of raising awareness among tourism businesses about laws, standards, and guidelines related to animal welfare and species conservation?<br>2. Is there consideration of raising awareness among visitors about animal welfare and species conservation, as well as avoiding the trade of endangered species? |
| **D(b) Resource management** | | | |
| D5 Energy conservation The destination has targets to reduce energy consumption, improve efficiency in its use, as well as increase the use of renewable energy. The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report their contribution to these targets. | a. Energy consumption targets are publicised and promoted.<br>b. Programme to increase energy efficiency – e.g. promoting and supporting insulation.<br>c. Investment in renewable energy and percent of total provision/consumption.<br>d. Support and incentives for energy monitoring and reduction by enterprises. | 7 | 1. Does the document set specific goals (or does the destination have them) for reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency at the destination?<br>2. Is there any proposal to increase energy efficiency, for example, by promoting and supporting thermal insulation?<br>3. Are there proposals for concrete investments in renewable energy at the destination?<br>4. Are there proposed measures and incentives for businesses to reduce energy consumption (or at least monitor it)? |
| D6 Water stewardship The destination encourages enterprises to measure, monitor, publicly report and manage water usage. Water risk in the destination is assessed and documented. In cases of high water risk, water stewardship goals are identified and actively pursued with enterprises, to ensure that tourism use does not conflict with the needs of local communities and ecosystems. | a. Provision of guidance and support for monitoring and reduction of water usage by enterprises.<br>b. Program to regularly assess water risk.<br>c. Setting, publication and enforcement of water stewardship goals, where water risk has been assessed as high.<br>d. Monitoring and control of sources and volume of water used for tourism purposes and its effect on local communities and ecosystems. Promotion and checking of adherence to goals by tourism enterprises.<br>e. Visitor information on water risk and minimising water use. | **6** | 1. Are there proposed measures for guiding and supporting tourism businesses in measuring and reducing water consumption?<br>2. Does the destination already measure (or does the document propose) the measurement and control of water used for tourism purposes and its impact on local communities and ecosystems?<br>3. Is there promotion (and verification) of water savings goals by tourism businesses, or is this proposed in the document?<br>4. Is information provided (or is it proposed in the document) to visitors about water risks and how to minimize its use during their stay at the destination? |
| D7 Water quality The destination monitors water quality for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues. | a. Programme of water quality monitoring.<br>b. Existence of data and reports on water quality.<br>c. Monitoring bathing water, with certification and identification of sites reaching set standards.<br>d. Evidence of actions to improve water quality.<br>e. Information for visitors on quality of local drinking water, to encourage use as alternative to bottled water. | **3, 6** | 1. Are there any initiatives proposed (or already in place) that allow visitors to learn about the quality of local water to promote its use as an alternative to bottled water? |

| Criteria | Indicators | SDG | Identification of the Criterion in the Planning Document |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION D: Environmental sustainability** | | | |
| **D(c) Management of waste and emissions** | | | |
| D8 Wastewater The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems. The destination ensures that wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely without adverse impacts on the local population and the environment. | a. Written guidelines and regulations on wastewater treatment. b. System of enforcing guidelines amongst enterprises. c. Monitoring/testing of released wastewater. d. Provision of sustainable municipal water treatment systems, for use by the tourism sector, where practical and appropriate. | **3, 14** | 1. Are there proposed (or already existing) guidelines or regulations for the treatment of wastewater in the document? |
| D9 Solid waste The destination measures and reports on its generation of waste and sets targets for its reduction. It ensures solid waste is properly treated and diverted from landfill, with provision of a multiple-stream collection and recycling system which effectively separates waste by type. The destination encourages enterprises to avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste, including food waste. Action is taken to eliminate or reduce single- use items, especially plastics. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably. | a. Waste monitoring programme, with results and targets published.<br>b. Coordinated campaign/advice/support with tourism enterprises on waste management, including food waste.<br>c. Campaign to reduce/eliminate single use items, especially plastics.<br>d. Waste management programme for public offices and facilities.<br>e. Provision of a collection and recycling system, with at least four streams (i.e. organic, paper, metal, glass and plastic).<br>f. Provision of sustainable system for disposal of residual waste.<br>g. Campaign to eliminate dropping of litter, including by visitors, and to keep public spaces clean.<br>h. Adequate bins for separated waste disposal. | 12, 15 | 1. Are there actions at the destination, or are they proposed in the document, to encourage businesses to avoid, reduce, reuse, or recycle solid waste, including food waste? |
| | | | 2. Are there campaigns proposed (or already existing) to advise tourism businesses on waste management, including food waste? |
| | | | 3. Are there campaigns proposed (or already existing) for residents and tourists to avoid littering and keep public spaces clean? |
| D10 GHG emissions and climate change mitigation The destination has targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and implements and reports on mitigation policies and actions. Enterprises are encouraged to measure, monitor, reduce or minimise, publicly report and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including from suppliers and service providers). Offsetting of any remaining emissions is encouraged. | a. Published target for percentage of emissions reduction by specified date.<br>b. Annual climate report, including monitoring and mitigation actions.<br>c. Supported campaign or other engagement with tourism enterprises on reduction and mitigation of emissions.<br>d. Action to reduce emissions from public sector operations.<br>e. Information for enterprises and visitors on offsetting schemes that meet recognised standards. | **13** | Not included |
| D11 Low-impact transportation The destination has targets to reduce transport emissions from travel to and within the destination. An increase in the use of sustainable, low-emissions vehicles and public transport and active travel (e.g., walking and cycling) is sought in order to reduce the contribution of tourism to air pollution, congestion and climate change. | a. Investment in more sustainable transport infrastructure, including public transport and low emissions vehicles.<br>b. Information promoted to visitors on alternative transport options to and within the destination<br>c. Data on visitor use of alternative transport modes.<br>d. Improvement and promotion of cycling and walking opportunities.<br>e. Prioritization of visitor markets accessible by short and more sustainable transport options.<br>f. Public sector and tourism enterprises prioritise low-impact transportation in their own operations. | **9, 13** | 1. Are there specific measures proposed (or already in place) for more sustainable transportation or low-emission vehicles? |
| | | | 2. Are there alternatives for public transportation to and within the destination proposed (or already existing)? |
| | | | 3. Is there, or is it proposed, a system for compiling data on the use of alternative transportation by visitors? |
| | | | 4. Are there strategies proposed (or already in place) to incentivize sustainable transportation and walking at the destination? |
| D12 Light and noise pollution The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution. The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations. | a. Guidelines on light and noise pollution – produced and promoted to tourism enterprises.<br>b. Identification and monitoring of potential sources of noise and light pollution related to tourism.<br>c. Mechanisms to enable residents to report noise and light pollution, with follow-up action. | **3, 11** | 1. Is there a proposal for creating an official document with guidelines to minimize light and noise pollution at the destination? |

Note: Criteria not included in the checklist.
In some cases, there are criteria that cannot be reconverted because they do not make sense in the context of destination tourism planning, generally related to the existence of legislation, as shown in the following table.

**Figure 6**

*Criteria not included in the Proposal.*

| SECTION | CRITERIA | | INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SECTION B: Socio-economic sustainability** | B6 Property and user rights | Laws and regulations regarding property rights and acquisitions are documented and enforced. They comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public consultation and do not authorize resettlement without free prior and informed consent and fair and just compensation. Laws and regulations also protect user and access rights to key resources. | a. Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding property rights and acquisitions and user and access rights to resources.<br>b. Reference in the above laws to communal and indigenous rights, public consultation and resettlement.<br>c. Evidence of enforcement of the above laws in the context of tourism development and activity.<br>d. Evidence of community consultation, consent and compensation. |
| **SECTION C: Cultural sustainability** | C2 Cultural artifacts | The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artifacts. The laws are enforced and publicly communicated, including to tourism enterprises and visitors. | a. Reference to relevant laws relating to historical artifacts pertaining in the destination (title, date).<br>b. Evidence of communication of relevant laws totourism enterprises and visitors.<br>c. Evidence of enforcement of relevant laws. |
| | C5 Intellectual property | The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals. | a. Reference to laws on intellectual property pertaining in the destination (title, date).<br>b. Communication of intellectual property rights to tourism stakeholders.<br>c. Evidence that intellectual property rights are protected in the development of cultural experiences for visitors. |
| **SECTION D: Environmental sustainability** | D10 GHG emissions and climate changemitigation. | The destination has targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and implements and reports on mitigation policies and actions. Enterprises are encouraged to measure, monitor, reduce or minimize, publicly report and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including from suppliers and service providers). Offsetting of any remaining emissions is encouraged | a. Published target for percentage of emissions reduction by specified date.<br>b. Annual climate report, including monitoring and mitigation actions.<br>c. Supported campaign or other engagement with tourism enterprises on reduction and mitigation of emissions.<br>d. Action to reduce emissions from public sector operations.<br>e. Information for enterprises and visitors on offsetting schemes that meet recognised standards. |

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable tourism planning is a multifaceted approach that requires the effective use of indicators, management of carrying capacities, and understanding of tourist perceptions. Balancing economic, social, and environmental goals is essential for the long-term success of tourism destinations, but until nowadays, certifications have been the way followed to walk forward sustainable destinations.

As pointed out by Padin (2012), sustainable tourism planning ensures efficiency, social equity and environmental preservation, in a word, tourism sustainability; or, in the words of Simão & Partidario (2012), tourism planning contributes to sustainable development if it has been sustainably conceived. Also Dwyer & Edwards (2010) insisted on this need, but curiously, during the decade after this research, the literature hasn't worked planning but certification. This paper builds on this evidence and demonstrates that it is far more essential to plan for sustainability than to ex-post correct destination management.

Since this has been a theoretical and conceptual work, its primary limitation lies in verifying its validity. This verification is only possible through practical application by evaluating existing planning documents—an endeavor in which the authors are already engaged. Upon successful validation, this study will have valuable practical implications, serving both as a guide for sustainable tourism planning and as a toolkit for monitoring the sustainability of planning documents.

In a future work, by applying the developed framework to real-world scenarios, the authors aim to demonstrate its effectiveness and practicality. This process will not only test the robustness of the proposed indicators but also refine them based on empirical findings. Ultimately, the validated framework will provide tourism planners with a reliable method to ensure that their planning documents are both sustainable and actionable, fostering more sustainable tourism practices globally.

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