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# Editorial: Tourism development, sustainability, and inclusion

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## Editorial on the Research Topic

### Tourism development, sustainability, and inclusion

Tourism is a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon that affects all spheres of life wherever it occurs. Often, however, it can be seen that this potential—both in terms of benefits and losses—remains underestimated. “We, the tourism people”—as Schänzel and Apollo (2023) wrote in their manifesto—must recognize that we have and play an important role in shaping reality. Unlike any other human activity, tourism has the unique ability to achieve its core objectives seamlessly while providing a comprehensive framework to explore the interconnectedness of people, the planet, and their collective wellbeing. When combined with a focus on empowering disadvantaged communities, tourism becomes a powerful means of directly advancing the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, adopted in 2015.

As Editors of *Tourism development, sustainability, and inclusion*, we have therefore been tasked to illustrate the use of tourism to empower vulnerable people. Furthermore, we aimed to highlight the issues related to our Research Topic from the perspectives of researchers from both the Global North and the Global South, providing a platform to juxtapose these often differing viewpoints. Although the research was conducted across diverse contexts—varying in location and focus—it is still possible to identify common conclusions and weave them into a cohesive narrative that integrates these distinct perspectives.

Pradhan highlighted the importance of inclusive decision-making, capacity building, financial support and sustainable practices in addressing livelihoods and environmental sustainability in isolated and peripheral rural communities. Torabi demonstrated that even without external assistance, the rural impoverished find ways to participate in and benefit from tourism activities. However, the research points to the need for targeted interventions to promote the participation of economically disadvantaged rural populations in the tourism sector and to harness the potential of tourism for poverty reduction. On the other hand, He et al. looked at greater national government involvement in tourism management in protected areas. The results highlighted that, despite some restrictive impacts on tourism, the policy had some positive results, promoting social equity in protected areas and catalyzing a shift from traditional livelihoods. Varghese and Natori demonstrated that tourism development in environmentally sensitive areas should consider socio-ecological impacts, as the culture and nature of a region are key elements of its attractiveness as a tourist destination. Thus, large-scale landscape planning should incorporate various stakeholders’ perspectives, including direct and indirect participants who may be affected

by tourism. [Monroy-Gamboa et al.](#) addressed royalty income from biodiversity and outdoor activities in protected areas. Unfortunately, due to questionable management, local residents and the region benefit minimally. The authors demonstrated the need to understand the impact of biodiversity royalties at regional, national and international levels and their contribution to the economies of different social groups. Other undiscovered frontiers were explored by [Ramanayake and Wengel](#), who, addressing the neglected area of inclusive and accessible tourism, investigated the impact of eating disorders on travel and tourism. Their work is a call for closer dialogue between researchers, the public and people with eating disorders, such as study's participants with eating disorders, to ensure that the value of their voices is highlighted and heard by tourism stakeholders.

The reflections of the authors of the individual articles, as well as the available literature, clearly indicate that well-planned and guided tourism development improves the livelihoods of local people, enhances the positive feelings of tourism participants, and has a positive impact on the natural environment ([Hall and Richards, 2000](#); [Hall, 2007, 2008](#); [Apollo et al., 2025](#)). While tourism

is not a cure-all for the world's challenges and inequalities, it can serve as a powerful force for positive change—but only if its development involves meaningful dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholder groups to align with the needs of communities, visitors, and environmental sustainability ([Hall and Richards, 2000](#); [Yeoman, 2012](#); [Timothy and Boyd, 2015](#); [Wengel et al., 2024](#)). Everyone's opinion should be heard and taken into account—only in this way will the group produce the desired results, and this has not changed since over half a century ago when [McGregor \(1960\)](#) developed the characteristics of an effective group. Unfortunately, what looks beautiful on paper is rarely followed by real action—setting a common direction that includes all stakeholder groups is an extremely rare phenomenon, if not unheard of. This is pointed out by the authors of this Research Topic, as well as the individual work of the Editors and other researchers. We would, therefore, like a model that was once developed admittedly for mountain tourism to serve as a framework for tourism planners. [Figure 1](#) presents a simplified framework that can guide tourism managers to consider and encourage all stakeholders to work together to create a better future.

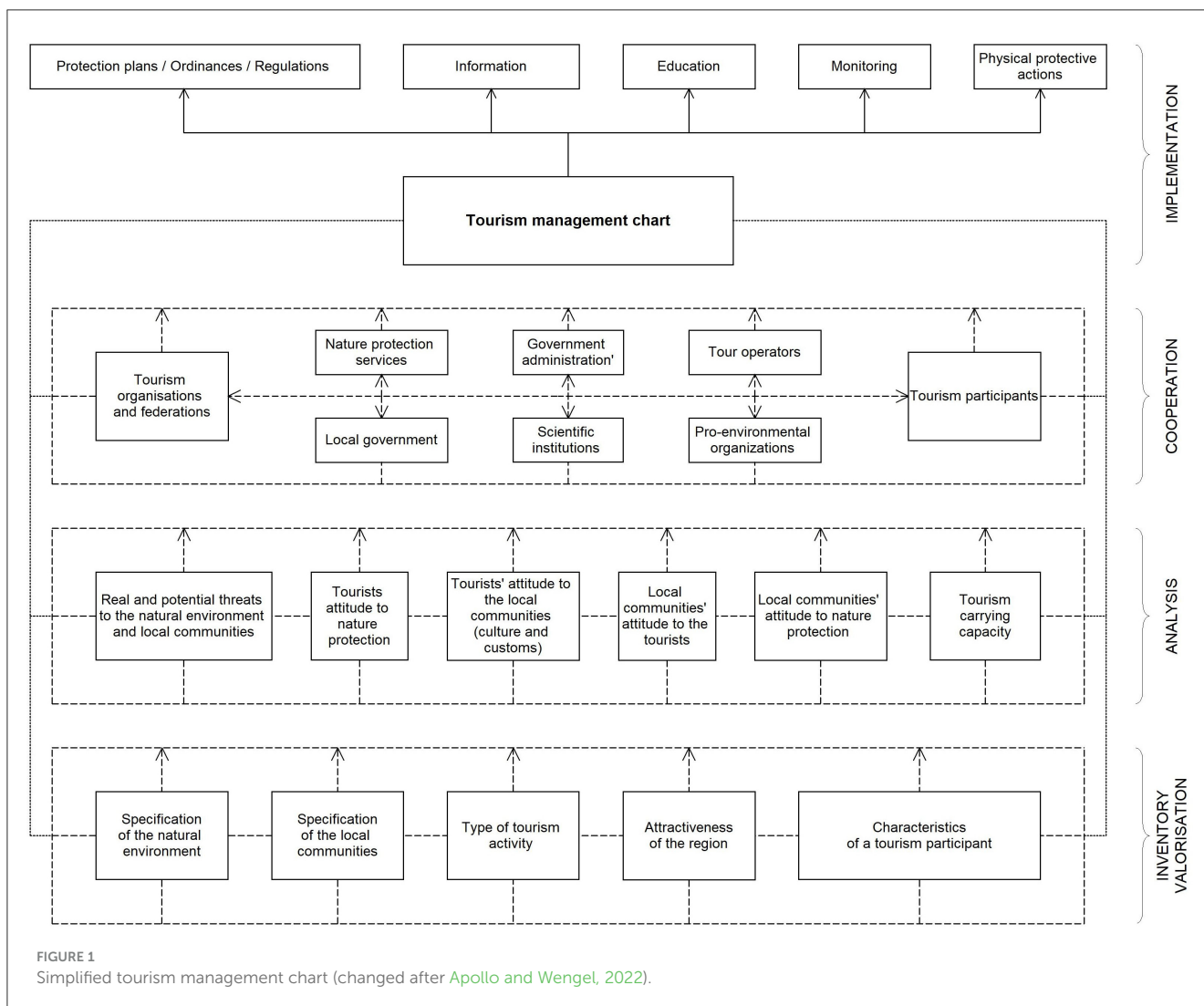


FIGURE 1  
Simplified tourism management chart (changed after [Apollo and Wengel, 2022](#)).

Overall, each action should be undertaken and planned individually, considering the region's specific characteristics and the type of tourism we want and plan to develop. It is imperative that the management plan is developed with the cooperation of the government administration, local authorities, nature conservation services, environmental organizations, scientific institutions, tour operators, tourism organizations and tourists (Apollo and Wengel, 2022).

The authors of the articles on this Research Topic have directly or indirectly demonstrated elements from the model presented. Namely, before implementing any idea, it is necessary to develop and agree on three pillars: first, we inventory and valorise what we dispose of, then we analyse the idea in the existing reality, and finally, we discuss cooperation with all stakeholders. This approach establishes a management plan that, while not perfect for any single party, remains fair and acceptable to all, creating a win-win scenario for tourism development, sustainability, and integration.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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