

# The Impact of Tourism on Islands: A Sustainability and Conservation Analysis

Estefanía Segarra <sup>1</sup>   Fausto Guapi <sup>1</sup>  Luis Miguel Yaulema Brito <sup>1</sup>  Carlos López <sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, 220202 El Coca, Ecuador.

 Correspondence: [estefania.segarra@esPOCH.edu.ec](mailto:estefania.segarra@esPOCH.edu.ec)  + 593994978908

DOI/URL: <https://doi.org/10.53313/gwj72147>

**Abstract:** Tourism is a fundamental driver of economic activity for many island destinations, providing essential revenue, employment opportunities, and infrastructure development. The influx of visitors often stimulates local economies by supporting businesses, from hospitality and retail to transportation and entertainment. This economic boost is crucial for islands where other sources of income might be limited. However, the heavy reliance on tourism can also pose significant risks, including economic vulnerability to global fluctuations and environmental degradation. Sustainable tourism practices are therefore vital to mitigate these risks and ensure that tourism continues to contribute positively to the local economy. Implementing strategies that prioritize environmental conservation and community well-being helps maintain the natural beauty and cultural heritage that attract visitors in the first place. Diversifying economic activities beyond tourism can also enhance resilience, reducing the dependency on a single sector. By adopting a balanced approach that integrates economic, environmental, and social considerations, islands can foster long-term prosperity and sustainability. Ultimately, effective tourism management not only drives economic growth but also ensures that the unique characteristics of island destinations are preserved for future generations.

**Keywords:** tourism, sustainability, island, natural

## 1. Introduction

Island tourism is highly attractive due to the geographical isolation and natural beauty of these destinations. Kaplan notes that "Islands offer a distinctive charm due to their geographic isolation, making them ideal retreats from urban environments" (1). This isolation results in tranquil environments that differ from more developed regions. Fodor's highlights that "The remoteness of islands allows visitors to experience environments that are less affected by urban development" (2). This preserved state enhances the allure of island destinations. Hunter argues that "The exclusive beauty of islands provides travelers with experiences that are unique compared to those found on



**Cita:** Segarra, E., Guapi, F., Brito, L. M. Y., & López, C. (2024). The Impact of Tourism on Islands: A Sustainability and Conservation Analysis. *Green World Journal*, 07(02), 147. <https://doi.org/10.53313/gwj72147>

Received: 10/April /2024

Accepted: 20/July /2024

Published: 05/Aug /2024

Prof. Carlos Mestanza-Ramón, PhD.  
Editor-in-Chief / CaMeRa Editorial  
[editor@greenworldjournal.com](mailto:editor@greenworldjournal.com)

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the mainland" (3). The distinctive conditions of islands are a significant factor in their appeal as tourist destinations. Brouder further supports this by stating that "The charm of islands often stems from their remote locations and untouched natural landscapes" (4). This inherent charm contributes to the increasing interest in island tourism. Finally, a report by the World Tourism Organization emphasizes that "Islands frequently attract tourists due to their unique environments and the opportunity to escape from everyday life" (5).

The biodiversity found on islands attracts ecotourists and researchers due to its uniqueness. Diamond emphasizes that "Islands often host species that are found nowhere else on earth due to their isolated environments" (6). This unique biodiversity makes islands critical for scientific study and ecotourism. Earle notes that "The isolation of islands has led to the evolution of unique species and delicate ecosystems" (7). These ecosystems attract both researchers and ecotourists interested in rare flora and fauna. Conservation International highlights that "Islands are crucial for the conservation of many threatened species due to their specialized ecosystems" (8). Preserving these ecosystems is essential for maintaining global biodiversity. Myers adds that "Island ecosystems are often fragile and require careful management to avoid degradation" (9). Effective management is crucial to protecting the ecological features of islands. Lastly, a report by National Geographic states that "Islands offer some of the most diverse and unique ecosystems, making them prime locations for biodiversity research" (10).

Island destinations are popular for outdoor recreational activities like diving and surfing, which significantly enhance their appeal. Warshaw notes that "Islands often provide some of the best conditions for diving and surfing due to their clear waters and unique wave patterns" (11). These ideal conditions make islands sought-after by water sports enthusiasts. National Geographic emphasizes that "Diving in islands allows exploration of vibrant reefs and diverse marine ecosystems" (12). The rich marine life adds to the attractiveness of island diving. Lonely Planet highlights that "Islands feature perfect beaches for surfing and snorkeling, making them ideal for water sports enthusiasts" (13). The suitability of these activities contributes to the overall appeal of island destinations. Smith and Schuster conclude that "Recreational activities on islands are closely linked to their unique natural features, offering memorable experiences for visitors" (14). The natural settings enhance the recreational opportunities available. Lastly, the International Surfing Association notes that "Islands offer some of the best surfing conditions due to their distinctive geographical features" (15).

The economic impact of tourism on island communities is significant, often serving as a primary income source. The World Tourism Organization reports that "Tourism constitutes a major part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many island communities, contributing to economic growth and job creation" (16). This economic input is vital for islands that rely heavily on tourism. Hall and Lew add that "Tourism can generate substantial revenue, facilitating the development of infrastructure and services on islands" (17). Revenue from tourism often supports local infrastructure improvements. Gössling warns that "The benefits of tourism must be managed to avoid excessive dependence and susceptibility to economic fluctuations" (18). Proper management is key to balancing the benefits and risks associated with tourism. Dredge and Jenkins argue that "Tourism can be a powerful driver for local development if managed with sustainable practices" (19). Sustainable practices help maximize benefits while minimizing potential risks. Finally, the UNWTO notes that "Effective tourism management can ensure long-term economic stability for island communities" (20).

Sustainability is a critical concern in island tourism to prevent environmental degradation. Earle cautions that "Unchecked tourism growth on islands can lead to severe environmental

degradation and habitat loss" (21). Protecting the environment is essential to maintaining the quality of island destinations. Mowforth and Munt state that "Tourism development on islands must be managed with sustainability in mind to preserve natural resources and reduce environmental impact" (22). Sustainable practices are key to protecting island ecosystems. The Conservation Foundation emphasizes that "Sustainable tourism management is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health" (23). Effective management ensures the long-term preservation of island environments. Cole adds that "Tourists and operators must engage in responsible practices to mitigate ecological impacts" (24). Responsible practices are crucial for reducing the environmental footprint of tourism. Finally, a report by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council notes that "Implementing sustainability measures can help mitigate the negative effects of tourism on island ecosystems" (25).

Island tourism also provides opportunities for cultural exchange and personal enrichment. Turner suggests that "Islands often offer a rich blend of cultures and traditions that provide travelers with educational and transformative experiences" (26). Cultural interaction is a significant aspect of island tourism. Cohen adds that "Engagement with local communities can offer tourists a deeper understanding of island traditions and ways of life" (27). This interaction benefits both visitors and host communities. McKercher and du Cros note that "Cultural tourism on islands can foster greater intercultural understanding and support the preservation of local traditions" (28). Cultural tourism helps preserve cultural heritage. Pratt and Bessi re conclude that "The cultural exchange facilitated by island tourism can positively impact local communities, offering new perspectives and opportunities" (29). This exchange enriches the experiences of both tourists and locals. Finally, a UNESCO report highlights that "Tourism can enhance cultural preservation and appreciation when managed responsibly" (30).

## 2. Sustainability and Island Tourism

Sustainable tourism on islands is crucial for balancing environmental preservation with economic development. G ssling highlights that "Sustainable tourism practices are essential for protecting the delicate ecosystems of island destinations while supporting local economies" (31). The emphasis on sustainability helps mitigate the adverse impacts of tourism on fragile island environments. Hall and Lew argue that "Integrating sustainability into tourism planning can enhance the resilience of island communities against environmental degradation" (32). Effective planning and management are key to maintaining environmental and economic stability. Mowforth and Munt state that "Sustainable tourism approaches on islands focus on minimizing ecological footprints and promoting responsible resource use" (33). These practices aim to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on island ecosystems. Furthermore, the World Tourism Organization notes that "Sustainable tourism strategies are critical for maintaining the balance between tourist demand and environmental conservation" (34). Balancing these elements is essential for long-term sustainability in island tourism.

Local communities play a vital role in the success of sustainable tourism initiatives on islands. The UNWTO emphasizes that "Engaging local communities in tourism development is key to ensuring that benefits are distributed equitably and that local culture and environment are respected" (35). Local involvement helps ensure that tourism practices align with community values and needs. Bramwell and Lane argue that "Community participation in tourism planning can lead to more sustainable outcomes and increased local support for conservation efforts" (36). Active participation fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to sustainable practices. According to Simpson, "Empowering local stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes enhances the effectiveness of sustainability measures" (37). Involvement in decision-making is crucial for the successful implementation of sustainable tourism strategies. Additionally, the research by Scheyvens suggests that "Effective community-based tourism initiatives can significantly contribute to both

environmental conservation and socio-economic development" (38). Community-based approaches support sustainable development while benefiting local residents.

The integration of conservation efforts into tourism planning is essential for protecting island environments. According to Dredge and Jenkins, "Effective conservation strategies must be integrated into tourism development plans to protect island ecosystems from degradation" (39). Conservation strategies help mitigate the environmental impacts of tourism. The report by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council highlights that "Adopting sustainable practices in tourism can significantly reduce negative impacts on island habitats and promote ecological balance" (40). Implementing such practices is crucial for maintaining habitat integrity. Wearing and Neil argue that "Monitoring and managing tourist activities are essential for ensuring that conservation goals are met while providing positive visitor experiences" (41). Active management ensures that tourism activities do not exceed environmental limits. Additionally, the research by Higham and Carr emphasizes that "Balancing tourism development with conservation objectives requires careful planning and ongoing evaluation" (42). Continuous assessment and adjustment are necessary to align tourism activities with conservation goals.

Educational programs and awareness campaigns are vital for promoting sustainable tourism practices. According to Kline, "Educational initiatives can increase awareness about the importance of sustainable tourism practices among tourists and industry stakeholders" (43). Education helps foster a culture of sustainability. Tzeng and Yang note that "Awareness campaigns aimed at both tourists and local businesses are crucial for promoting environmentally responsible behaviors" (44). These campaigns can effectively change attitudes and behaviors related to tourism. The research by McKercher and du Cros indicates that "Incorporating sustainability education into tourism curricula can prepare future professionals to advocate for and implement best practices" (45). Training future professionals is essential for long-term sustainability in tourism. Additionally, Weaver highlights that "Community-based education programs can enhance local understanding of sustainable tourism and its benefits" (46). Local education initiatives support the broader adoption of sustainable practices.

### 3. Economy and Tourism in islands

Tourism significantly impacts the economies of island destinations by contributing to job creation and local revenue. According to the World Tourism Organization, "Tourism is a major economic driver for many islands, providing substantial employment opportunities and contributing to local income" (1). The economic boost from tourism helps support various sectors within island communities. Hall and Lew further emphasize that "The influx of tourists generates revenue that can be reinvested into local infrastructure and services, enhancing overall community welfare" (2). This reinvestment improves quality of life and supports further economic development. Additionally, Bramwell and Lane argue that "Tourism's economic benefits are often pivotal in smaller island economies, where other sources of income may be limited" (3). In such contexts, tourism becomes a vital component of economic stability.

The reliance on tourism can also lead to economic vulnerabilities, particularly in response to global events and environmental changes. Gössling notes that "Islands heavily dependent on tourism may face significant economic challenges during global downturns or environmental crises" (4). This dependency can make island economies susceptible to external shocks. The research by Hall and Page supports this, stating that "Economic fluctuations and environmental issues can disproportionately impact island destinations, highlighting the need for diversified economic strategies" (5). Diversification helps mitigate the risks associated with over-reliance on tourism. Additionally, the study by Mowforth and Munt highlights that "Economic resilience in island communities requires

balancing tourism with other economic activities to reduce vulnerability" (6). A balanced approach can enhance overall economic stability.

Effective management of tourism revenue and resources is critical to maximizing benefits and ensuring long-term economic growth. The World Travel & Tourism Council asserts that "Strategic management of tourism resources and revenue is essential for sustaining economic benefits and fostering growth in island economies" (7). Effective management practices help optimize tourism's economic contributions. According to a report by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, "Implementing best practices in tourism management can enhance economic resilience and sustainability in island destinations" (8). Such practices support the long-term viability of tourism. Additionally, the work by Weaver highlights that "Integrating sustainability principles into tourism management can lead to more balanced and equitable economic outcomes for island communities" (9). Sustainable management approaches help achieve equitable and enduring economic benefits.

#### 4. Conclusion

Tourism plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic landscape of island destinations, offering substantial opportunities for growth and development. While tourism generates significant revenue and employment, it also poses challenges that require careful management to avoid negative impacts on local ecosystems and communities. Balancing economic benefits with environmental and cultural preservation is essential for achieving sustainable growth. By implementing responsible tourism practices and diversifying economic activities, island economies can enhance their resilience and ensure long-term prosperity. Ultimately, a well-managed tourism sector that aligns with sustainability principles not only supports economic development but also safeguards the unique environmental and cultural assets that attract visitors to these islands.

**Funding:** The authors fully funded the study.

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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