

GLOBAL OBSERVATORY ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

BACKGROUND

"You can only manage what you can measure"

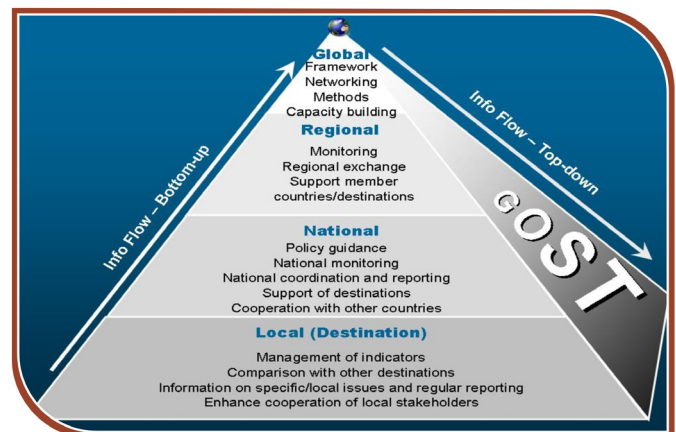
The success of tourism has been conventionally measured by tourist arrivals and revenues, but today it is not enough to maintain competitiveness. Policy makers and managers need accurate information on the complete range of tourism's impacts on environmental, social and economic aspects, in order to support responsible decision making. Too often monitoring and evaluation of sustainability (when exercised) is addressed at the end of tourism planning processes, when policy makers and planners realize that even the baseline information is missing and therefore makes it difficult to undertake the process.

For these reasons, observatories and similar initiatives have been developed in different sectors and levels worldwide, with the common aim of providing frameworks for the regular and systematic gathering, analysis and communication (reporting) of data and information on an agreed set of issues.

Recognising the need of a strategic approach for the sustainable development of tourism, UNWTO supports and promotes the application of sustainable tourism indicators as an essential support tool and integral part of policy making, planning and management processes, based on the '12 Sustainability Aims' (see below).

KEY OBJECTIVES

The initiative Global Observatories on Sustainable Tourism (GOST) is in response to the growing demand by tourism organizations and stakeholders at the different levels for a more systematic application of monitoring, evaluation and information management techniques, as key tools for the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategies, plans and management processes. It aims at facilitating the establishment of a network of observatories at the global, regional, national and local (destination) levels.



Linking observatories at different levels

GOST aims to:

- **Provide methodological references** on how to monitor and measure environmental and socio-economic impacts of tourism, and progress with policies and plans.
- **Build capacities of tourism organizations** at the different levels to regularly and systematically analyse sustainable tourism policy trends and impacts.
- **Identify and disseminate good practices** and advances in monitoring techniques.
- Allow the **sharing of information and comparison** between regions, countries and destinations.
- **Enhance coordination** between tourism stakeholders. And **create a network** of research and training institutions and experts as knowledge centres to support the establishment and operation of observatories.

1. Economic Viability
2. Local Prosperity
3. Employment Quality
4. Social Equity
5. Visitor Fulfilment
6. Local Control
7. Community Wellbeing
8. Cultural Richness
9. Physical Integrity
10. Biological Diversity
11. Resource Efficiency
12. Environmental Purity

The '12 Sustainability Aims' and the policy instruments described in the UNWTO/UNEP 'Guide for Policy Makers on Making Tourism More Sustainable' have become international references for initiatives at different levels.

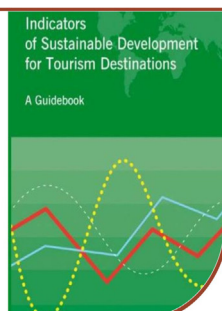
Observatories and reporting initiatives have been developed in other sectors. A good example is the UN-Habitat Global Urban Observatory, which provides a methodological framework, indicators and capacity building support for cities in order to improve information on key management issues. It also promotes the establishment of Urban Observatories at different levels, with practical guidelines and achievable conditions to participate.

MAIN SERVICES AND BENEFITS

- Specialized web-portal with interactive information and exchange opportunities
- Best practices and lessons-learned
- Database of experts and organizations
- Access to management techniques and methodologies
- Checklists, guidelines and frameworks
- Reporting mechanism
- Training methods
- Benchmarking
- Networking opportunities



The 2004 UNWTO 'Guidebook on Sustainability Indicators for Tourism Destinations' provides a step-by-step methodology on indicators application, at demonstration destinations. A series of regional and national workshops has been organized. As a result, pilot Observatories are being developed currently in China, Montenegro, Philippines and Saudi Arabia.



NEXT STEPS

- Establishment of an international consultation mechanism, involving international and regional partner organizations, UNWTO members and experts, research and education institutions.
- Completing the analysis and summary of observatory, reporting and indicators initiatives.
- Defining an initial set of tools and guidelines for policy and destination analysis at the different levels.
- Devising a reporting format and process for national and destination tourism administrations in order to communicate and measure process toward sustainability.
- Setting up an initial Observatory website for communication with on-line tools and resources.
- Setting up of a strategic training programme, linked with ongoing capacity building and technical assistance activities of UNWTO and its partners.
- Carrying out a series of demonstration projects and setting up a dissemination and replication mechanism.
- Further development of the project in cooperation with donor organizations, international organizations and research institutes.

FURTHER REFERENCES:

- UNWTO Indicator Workshop Reports
<http://www.unwto.org/sdt/fields/en/policy.php#2>
- UNWTO Guidebook on Indicators of Sustainability Development for Tourism Destinations
<http://www.wtoelibrary.org>
- UNWTO/UNEP Guide for Policy Makers on Making Tourism More Sustainable
<http://www.wtoelibrary.org>

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