

# Review of Literature of the Rural Heritage Tourism Destination

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**Abstract.** Rural heritage tourism destination management is an essential knowledge area that should be investigated to achieve sustainable destination, especially for an emerging destination. The goal of this process is to ensure that these elements are thoroughly inspected and rigidly organized due to the main concepts, theories, methods and approaches mentioning different perspectives to tackle these certain elements. In order to cope with the complexity of the relation between the destination elements and its characteristics and sequence of the maturity of the selected destination, all that needs in-depth knowledge to assist the researchers in developing and improving different types of approaches and tools, and in structuring and assessing the destination. We develop a neat backbone literature review concerning the all aspects of the sustainable rural heritage tourism destination. We review the existing methods, approaches and theories applied on the relative field, and further study the relevant challenges that have been the target of investigation in the academic literature. The paper is intended to be the newest and the most important existing study on the topic of rural heritage emerging tourism destination. The results are particularly relevant to practitioners seeking a better grasp on managing tourism destination as well as achieving sustainability in tourism destinations. As a major finding of the review, the results strongly suggest the need for more practitioner-oriented and industry-driven empirical studies in the area of flexible managerial framework to cope with special and dynamic characteristics of different tourism destinations.

## 1 Introduction

The term ‘tourism destination’ has been widely mentioned and defined in too many different ways [1]. And it looks like that there is no total agreement on a specific meaning of this terminology [1-2]. By reviewing the tourism literature, a tourism destination is expected to have four main characteristics: it should be a limited defined geographical area; it must be selected and visited by tourists; it needs to provide different types of tourism products and services; and it involves multiple stakeholders with different interests and needs. First, those who defined the destination as a particular specific limited geographical area toward which the tourist goes to visit and consume the tourism products and services, is the contrast to an origin place, a place from where the tourist comes [3]. The destination area can be perceived at diverse geographical scales [2, 4-8]. Secondly, while taking a trip, the tourist might tackle with a destination in a various scale and different relations due to the perceived attraction that is already build in the destination, a town or a city, a tourism district, a province, a tourism region within one country, or a whole country. Moreover, on a trip, the tourist may visit a single or multiple

tourism destinations [5], and destinations within [7]. Excluding a purpose built attraction, the town or resort city considered to be the smallest level at which the tourist visits and all tourism services can exist [7]. Many resort destinations can exist at local scale like that [2]. Third, a local tourism destination can be defined as a physical space where a tourist can spend at least one overnight. To consume and take benefit of the tourism products such as support services, attractions and tourist resources within one day's return travel time, at least. It should have physical and administrative boundaries to be defined by its management, and the destination market competitiveness is to be determined by the images and perceptions held by tourists toward that destination [9]. Lastly, tourism destination incorporate various, interrelated and even interest conflict stakeholders that represent the most of the affected host community, and these stakeholders can nest and network to form larger destinations, and simply, among various geographical scales of the destination, a village or a town or a city are assumed to be a scale where most tourism activities take place [10].

## 2 Heritage Tourism Destination

The most recent definitions of the Heritage Tourism is; "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past, and it can include cultural, historic and natural resources [11], whereas the [12] considered it to encompass elements of living culture, history, and natural history of place that communities value and steward for the future. These elements are very specific to a community or region and can contribute to pride, stability, growth, and economic development.

For a long time many researches considered the heritage tourism is totally different from the general concept of tourism, especially in the context of ideology and institution. In specific words, it can be argued that a so-called "curatorial approach" still pervades the heritage sector [13]. That clarifies the primary objective of the heritage is to take care of the historical properties and maintaining them in good status as pristine as possible, mentioning the target of financial solvency and public access entrance into the decision making process as a secondary objective. By other words, the heritage objectives tends to focusing on comprising a conservation goal with financial and public access constraints. And many heritage managers do not like to consider themselves involved in the "tourism business" [14], caring to consider their role is to maintain and guard the national heritage rather than to provide a public access to it [15]. The worst consequence of the lack attention to the financial solvency of the heritage establishment is the predicted backlog of the unexpected or urgent maintenance and repair work, taking in to consideration that access to traditional sources of public funding has been restricted by government spending cuts and other constrains. This serious consequence put the heritage establishments face to face with the critical value of these historic buildings, that has memorial and social respect in terms of society and local community [16]. So most of the heritage managers tend to activate the principle of "user pays" which is now commonly used as a financial leverage is now widely recognized for promoting sustainability in the major forms of tourism [17-19], Although, a lot of managers appears to worry about implementing this principle, because it only cover a part of the financial needs of the "full social costs" [20]. According to WHS (2014) we can categorize the world heritage sites into these main categories; Geological formation; Wildlife habitat; Natural landscape; Religious structure; Archaeological site; Urban landscape; Secular structure; Human activity.

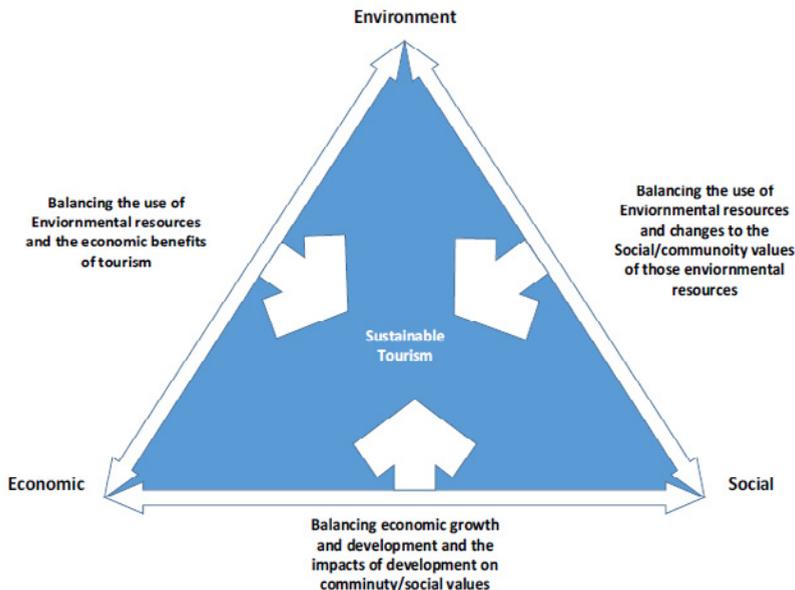
## 3 Rural Tourism Destination

To define rural tourism we can be broadly say that it is the tourism which occurs in rural areas, although this definition raises many questions about what made up the latter. Notions of rural can be socially formatted and may differ by the country and /or culture. However, specific common attributes and characteristic can be mentioned such as low population densities and only a small limited land given over to the built environment, that create an impression of space. Concerning the implication that social structures will be more traditional, and the natural landscape will be prominent and that

access to the sites could be difficult [21]. Agriculture is could be practiced, but not necessarily and rural tourism and farm tourism are not always collided. The ambiguities of definitions about rural areas and rural tourism persist [22] and considering that both of the concepts are multi-faceted and broadly opened to a degree of interpretation. A destination's geography and general environment set up will form the understanding in a way that can be suggested by comparison of the scenery and leisure opportunities that can be found in different areas and different sites. Oppermann [23] says that all academic enquiries about rural tourism dates from the 1950s, made reference to an early publication by Ager [24] which describes tourism in Alpine regions and the advantages that can be brought to farmers. Benefits include additional income, job creation and a reduction in rural depopulation. Succeeding studies in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the positive economic effects, although all the attention was directed to socio-cultural and environmental outcomes. The ambiguous significance of rural tourism was reflected in the dedication of a special issue of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism to the mentioned topic in 1994 that was recalled by Sharpley and Roberts [22] after a decade of time. More recently, rural tourism is being observed as a catalyst of development and re generation as far as the socio-economic issue is mentioned [25], especially valuable in areas and sites where traditional agricultural activities are in decline [26-27]. Moreover, rural tourism can be promoted as a better alternative to mass tourism in some cases [28-30]. Rural tourism benefits destination at very different stages of development, even the world's poorest countries [31]. Meanwhile there is a decreasing concerns about the disappointing financial returns in special cases of the rural tourism and the bad effects and even damage to the physical and cultural landscapes [32-34].

#### 4 Sustainability in Tourism Destination

It can be said that the first definition that was assigned to sustainable tourism was declared by the United Nation World Tourism Organization in (1996): "tourism which leads to management of all areas, in such a way, that the economic, social and environmental needs are being fulfilled with the cultural integration, ecological processes, biodiversity and supporting the development of societies". Moreover , regarding to the main concept of sustainable development, UNWTO [35] said that sustainable tourism can be described also as a process that "takes into account the needs of present tourists and traveler needs of the future generations as well" [36]. The figure 1. Describes the main three dimensions of the sustainability in tourism industry.



**Figure 1.** Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism ; Source: Sustainable Tourism Online [37]

Tourism researchers main attention was first turned to social and environmental issues for almost four decades ago [38-46]. But researches started using the specific term of sustainable tourism started barely two decades ago [47-48]. The first decade stated compilations [49-53], and basic frameworks from backgrounds in mass tourism [54-58], economics [59-60] and environmental management [61]. Whereas the second decade researchers started to reconsider the concepts and provide more critical thinking to the issues of sustainability such as [30, 62-66].

We can brief the outcome of the researchers in the third decade by the progress in assessing the focus, scope, and outcome of the academic research publication in the field of sustainable tourism versus practical tools of the sustainability in tourism industry from a commercial point of view. In simple words we can say that main issues in sustainable tourism can be defined based on the fundamentals of sustainability, not regarding the literature of tourism research. This assumption relies on the truth that both the tourism industry, and sustainability, are to be claimed real-world phenomena. So, this review is not an attempt to deduce internally-generated research that considers the sustainable tourism as an entity and produce publications on that basis. But, it tries to construct externally-generated themes by implementing the key elements of sustainability to tourism as a different entity, and make a good use of this method to evaluate the sustainable tourism literature. This produce two outcomes. Firstly, the specific sustainability in tourism industry as a special case. Secondly, it compares relatively similar researches efforts versus the industrial significance of both sustainability and tourism as a separated industries, by that they can identify the priorities for future research in the sustainable tourism as a final destination.

Sustainable tourism (ST), it signifies a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, taking "full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts" [67] taking the stakeholders' needs, benefits and interests in to consideration. This wide expanded definition recognizes the main three pillars that underpin sustainable development, taking into consideration the need to act responsibly as declared in the 1987 Brundtland report [68], and emphasize on the concerned parties (the stakeholders) as critical element in the implementation of ST.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

It is clearly obvious from observing the related subject that there still a big gap to be filled by researches especially in the field of the rural heritage tourism destinations, because most of the researchers is directed to study the cases of Urban heritage tourism destinations because of their intimate location to the investors and main tourism tours paths.

The other most important knowledge area that needs to be enhanced by researchers' articles and studies is the influence of the critical stakeholders on the competitiveness and productivity of the tourism destination, especially those in rural and heritage context. Especially when it comes to coordinating and collaboration between the different and possibly contradicted interests, objectives and goals of the stakeholders' categories and classification, the review of literature exposed also a wide gap to be filled regarding the previous focus point which is significantly important to plan, monitor, and develop the performance tourism destination.

## Acknowledgement

"The authors would like to extend their appreciation to the School of Housing Building & Planning and also Universiti Sains Malaysia for the Research University Cluster Grant for Sustainable Tourism Research Cluster entitled 'Heritage Awareness and Interpretation' that makes this study and paper possible."

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