



From Sustainable Tourism to Regenerative Tourism

Introduction

This chapter outlines the global sustainable development agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework which is made up of 17 goals to be achieved by 2030. This global framework is offered as a lens through which sustainable development in the context of tourism is being implemented and measured. The advancements and shortfalls related to sustainable tourism are discussed using the three pillars of socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability. The notion of regenerative tourism is introduced as a bottom-up approach that has the potential to lead to the reinvention of tourism but will require a mindset shift and systems change (Dredge, 2022). At the end of the chapter, three scenarios are presented to foster discussion on the potential future of tourism in a world impacted by global warming.

The UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2024) noted an estimated 1.3 billion international tourist arrivals in 2023. This figure represents a recovery of 88% of pre-pandemic levels and is expected to increase further in the coming years. In fact, a UNWTO forecast expected international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion in 2030, although this number might need to be revised in the light of the pandemic (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2023). Given these vast numbers, it becomes important to explore the existential threats posed by the tourism industry and the impact this growth has on natural, socio-cultural and economic environments across the world. In effect, the issue of finding the appropriate balance between what the community needs, environmental conservation and economic growth is at the core of discussions related to sustainable tourism (Hall & Wood, 2021).

The tourism industry is cognisant of the impacts it has on the environment, and sustainable development in tourism has been a topic of debate for a long time.