

# Chapter 6

## Sustainable Tourism Development in Asia: Evaluation of the Potential and Challenges:

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### ABSTRACT

*Sustainable Tourism as a concept respects both local people, the traveler, cultural heritage and the environment. It should meet the needs of and opportunity for the future. But operationalizing sustainable tourism is problematic due to analytical weaknesses, conceptual criticisms and the need to redefine better perspectives. Asia faces many challenges in promoting sustainable tourism including political leadership, poor participation by all stakeholders, adverse environmental and social impacts. Another challenge is to ensure social sustainability and creating opportunities to transfer income to the poorer. The empirical study of island tourism in Malaysia shows that Marine Parks regulations are not adequately enforced and Malaysian coral reefs can suffer from increasing degradation. Water pollution, overfishing, beach erosion, coral bleaching and damage, fishing, snorkeling and poor recycling and sewage disposal all are still significant challenges to the Marine Park in Tioman Island in Malaysia.*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries with a wide spectrum of employment opportunities and income for many countries in Asia. Tourism contributes 9 percent of the world's GDP, 8 percent of employment and 5 percent of GHGs emissions (UNEP 2002). Table 1 shows international tourism arrivals from many countries including Europe and Asia for the period 2000-2014. The table shows that tourist arrivals have increased continuously over the 2000-2014 period. Tourism can have serious impacts on the environment, society, cultural heritage and natural ecosystems. The environmental impacts of tourism began to be noticed early and several tourism concepts focusing on nature such as ecotourism, nature tourism etc emerged. These impacts later led to the emergence of sustainable tourism defined as

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“tourism that respects both local people and the traveler, cultural heritage and the environment” (Buckley 2012; World Tourism Organization 2001a, 2001b; Cater 1993).

Sustainable tourism, focuses on the balance between the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. Sustainable tourism emphasizes economic, social and environmental dimensions in an integrated manner to minimize the impact on the environment and local culture so that it will be available for future generations, while contributing to income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems (Hall et al. 2003; Hall et al 1991). By doing so, sustainable tourism provides crucial economic incentives for habitat and biodiversity protection. Revenues from visitor spending are often channeled back into nature conservation or capacity building programs for local communities and poverty reduction and the achievement of common goals towards sustainable development (Driml & Common 1995).

Sustainable tourism is important in achieving Millennium Sustainable Development Goals (MSDGs) adopted in 2015. Sustainable tourism will raise pertinent issues in Asia including poverty, environmental degradation and biodiversity extinction. In Indonesia for example, tourism generates, foreign earnings, combat poverty, and support development of many remote areas. Sustainable tourism has promoted biodiversity conservation using conservation areas for tourism education and experience with new nature-based destinations, guidelines for visiting pristine areas and strict environmental standards for tourism.

Despite the rhetoric, the success of sustainable tourism remains mixed. Many factors have intervened on the success of sustainable tourism enterprises including financial and political conflicts and climate change. Private sector marketing approaches to promote sustainable tourism and ecocertification and corporate social responsibility largely failed (Black & Crabtree 2007, Buckley 2002). Thus insightful evaluation of sustainable tourism is timely.

The purpose of this chapter is to (a) review existing literature to ascertain the success and problems in implementing sustainable tourism in Asia (b) identify the challenges and opportunities of sustainable tourism in Asia (c) present the findings of a case study of sustainable island tourism in Malaysia and

*Table 1. International tourist arrivals by country 2000-2014*

Country	2000	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014
France	77,190,000	74,988,000	79,218,000	76,764,000	76,647,000	80,499,000	81,980,000	83,767,000
Unites States	51,238,000	49,206,000	58,007,000	55,103,000	60,010,000	62,821,000	66,657,000	75,011,000
China	31,229,000	46,809,000	53,049,000	50,875,000	55,664,000	57,581,000	57,725,000	55,622,000
Turkey	9,586,000	20,273,000	29,792,000	30,187,000	31,364,000	34,654,000	35,698,000	39,811,000
United Kingdom	23,212,000	28,039,000	30,142,000	28,199,000	28,295,000	29,306,000	29,282,000	32,613,000
Mexico	20,641,000	21,915,000	22,931,000	22,346,000	23,290,000	23,403,000	23,403,000	29,346,000
Hong Kong SAR, China	8,814,000	14,773,000	17,319,000	16,926,000	20,085,000	22,316,000	23,770,000	27,770,000
Malaysia	10,222,000	16,431,000	22,052,000	23,646,000	24,577,000	24,714,000	25,033,000	27,437,000
Thailand	9,579,000	11,567,000	14,584,000	14,150,000	15,936,000	19,23,000	22,354,000	24,810,000
Korea	5,322,000	6,023,000	6,891,000	7,818,000	8,798,000	9,795,000	11,140,000	14,202,000
Japan	4,757,000	6,728,000	8,351,000	6,790,000	8,611,000	6,219,000	8,358,000	13,413,000
Singapore	6,062,000	7,079,000	7,778,000	7,488,000	9,161,000	10,390,000	11,098,000	11,864,000

Source: World Data Atlas Tourism, Knoema.com 2015

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