



## An Outlook on Responsible Tourism in Southeast Asia



Lenny Yusrini<sup>a,b\*</sup>; Nhem Sochea<sup>c</sup>; Ann Suwaree Ashton<sup>d</sup>; Ngo Tuyet Diem Khanh<sup>e</sup>; Rasmee Islam<sup>f</sup>; Santi Rahmawati<sup>g</sup>; Veasna Ky<sup>h</sup>; Andrea Le Ta Hoang Nhi<sup>i</sup>; Sharifah Nurafizah Syed Annuar<sup>j</sup>; Hiram Ting<sup>i,k</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Tropical Biodiversity Conservation Graduate Study Program, IPB University, Indonesia; <sup>b</sup>Travel Operation Department, Akademi Pariwisata Indonesia, Indonesia; <sup>c</sup>Department of Tourism, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia; <sup>d</sup>Graduate School of Tourism Management, National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand; <sup>e</sup>Hoa Sen University, Vietnam; <sup>f</sup>Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Thailand; <sup>g</sup>Research Synergy Foundation, Indonesia; <sup>h</sup>Linnaeus University, Cambodia; <sup>i</sup>Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, UCSI University, Malaysia; <sup>j</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah Branch Kota Kinabalu Campus, Malaysia; <sup>k</sup>Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: [lenny@akpindo.ac.id](mailto:lenny@akpindo.ac.id)

Received 7 June 2021; Revised 13 September 2021, 8 November 2021; Accepted 3 January 2022

**ABSTRACT:** Despite the influx of wealth and business opportunities tourism brings, its degrading impact on the environment and local destinations remain as a major concern. Although the importance of sustainable tourism is undeniable, it often becomes a concept or catchphrase which is found value-laden, ambiguous or onerous. One main reason is because the local issues and priorities in a destination or region are usually dissimilar to another. While the discourse on sustainable development in tourism continues largely for good cause, the importance of responsibility begins to emerge. *Responsible Tourism* is an important, urgent and significant call for action, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. As tourism development and recovery is essential to the economy of developing region, managing priorities and harnessing partnership between stakeholders in a responsible manner become increasingly crucial. As scholars and residents in Southeast Asia, our viewpoints offer some insights about responsible tourism in this region. In addition, a qualitative approach via online survey was administered to elicit the perceptions of tourism academics, practitioners and frequent travellers towards responsible tourism. A framework was subsequently proposed to articulate what responsible tourism is in the Southeast Asian context.

**KEYWORDS:** responsible tourism; Southeast Asia; sustainable tourism; priorities; stakeholders

## Background

As travel and tourism is one of the most important sectors in the tertiary industry and arguably the largest and most diverse service industry, it is placed among the largest economic contributors for many countries, especially those with a developing economy. Despite the influx of wealth and business opportunities tourism brings, its degrading impact on the environment and local destinations remain as a major concern. The concept of *Sustainable*

*Tourism*, with the aim of minimizing the negative effects of tourism activities, has since become a universally accepted and politically appropriate direction for tourism development (Sharpley, 2003). Although the importance of sustainable tourism is undeniable, it often appears as a mere concept and rhetoric which is not feasible in various aspects (Butler, 2015). Sustainability is often regarded as value-laden, ambiguous or onerous because local contexts and issues are different across destinations and regions (Gibbons et al., 1994; Ting et al., 2020). Worse still, the term is often used loosely by scholars or practitioners in their speeches and articles to justify the nobility of their works or persuade the public about the environmental-friendliness of their marketing offering.

While the discourse on sustainable development in tourism continues largely for good cause, the importance of responsibility begins to emerge (Goodwin, 2012; Pope et al., 2019). Even though the coming together of tourism leaders and stakeholders to discuss issues and future plans are necessary, finding effective ways to cooperate and integrate their knowledge and resources for common goals requires more than nodding heads, shaking hands and taking group photos (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014; Ting et al., 2020; Tosun, 2006). At its core, responsibility involves not only revised policies and renewed declarations, but also process and action through which commitments are made with trust, respect and resolve to collaborate (Cheer et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2020). Far from being another tourism label or product, *Responsible Tourism* is an important, urgent and significant call for action, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis (Cheer et al., 2021; Saarinen, 2021; Ting et al., 2021). It looks into ethical behaviours or actions taken by tourism stakeholders to address immediate priorities without losing focus of the global issues. It is about maximizing benefits via tourism development and recovery in the contemporary setting, determining priorities and workable initiatives based on the local contexts, working together through trust and respect as well as involving the local community in decision-making process.

### **Why Southeast Asia?**

Southeast Asia is often seen as a lucrative business market due to its richness in nature and biodiversity, diverse cultures and people as well as affordable travel expenses. While its history and modern-day politics can be complex at times, it is generally safe for tourists to travel around. Nevertheless, given the effect of globalization and the burgeoning of tourism and hospitality activities, it has inevitably had a significant impact on the environment, economy, social development, and community well-being (Brahmasrene & Lee, 2017; Luo et al., 2018). In addition to issues which are commonly known in tourism, such as carbon footprint and mismanagement of overcrowding in a destination, the concerns also include intricate conundrums, such as animal and human exploitation for entertainment as well as tourism projects motivated by power play. Orphanage tourism, elephant riding and the Ping-Pong show, among others, are regarded as unethical, modern-day slavery and colonization.

Responsible tourism is germane to the countries in Southeast Asia because it aims to benefit the local community, create employment opportunities, preserve cultures, protect environment and sustain economic growth, which in turn, improves the quality of life. This region has long been regarded as economically dynamic due to its rising populations and market opportunities to many developed countries. Despite the importance of various tourism aspects, such as smart tourism, event tourism and ecotourism, the sense of responsibility of each and every stakeholder is what is largely needed to develop and recover tourism in Southeast Asia. As scholars and residents in this region, the present paper is written to provide our views (including

the perceptions of other informants) about what responsible tourism is in a holistic manner. It is hoped that our viewpoints will complement the extant literature on responsible tourism done in other countries (e.g., India, South Africa and European countries), and reinforce the perennial call to/for action.



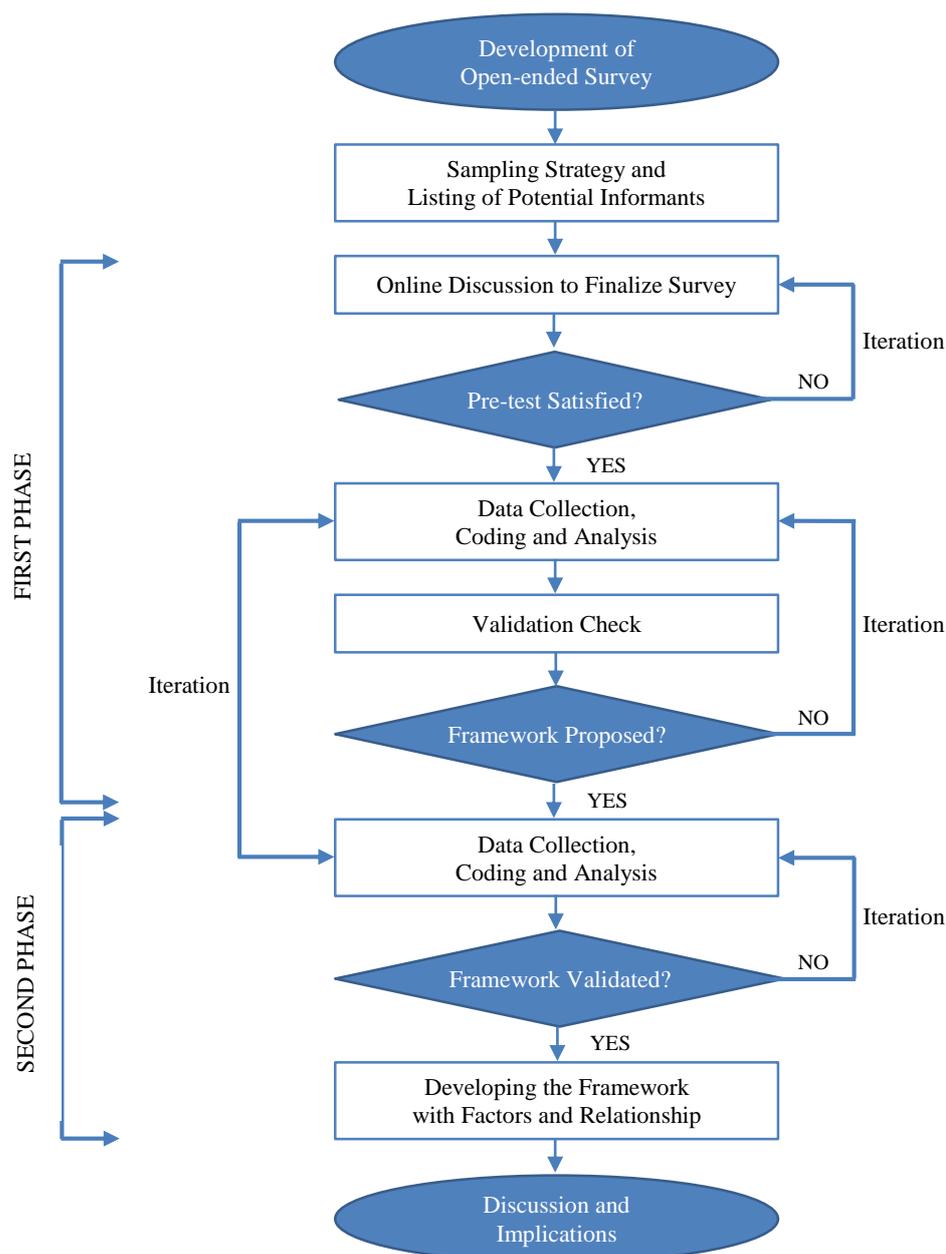
Figure 1: Members of Southeast Asia Research Academy (SEARA)

## Methodology

A qualitative approach, which assumes interpretive paradigm, was adopted to explore and understand what responsible tourism means in Southeast Asia (Granek & Nakash, 2016). In addition to our observations as scholars and residents in Southeast Asia, a pilot study using open-ended survey was designed to collect data from other residents in the region. The survey was administered online through SEARA members as shown in Figure 1 in order to reach out to more potential informants in the region. Purposive sampling strategy was thus appropriated to ensure that the informants fulfilled three selection criteria: (1) they were citizens of Southeast Asia and were residing in the region, (2) they were academics or practitioners in the travel, tourism and hospitality fields, and (3) they were frequent travellers (i.e. they travelled at least once per month, be it a domestic or international travel) before the pandemic.

Online meetings among SEARA members were held to design the survey and discuss how it could be distributed during the pandemic. Potential informants in Southeast Asia were listed and their backgrounds evaluated to ascertain their eligibility for the survey. In addition to professors and lecturers in tourism and hospitality schools, travel agents, officials in tourism agencies and businesspeople who travelled frequently were included. The survey was pre-tested and subsequently distributed to the listed informants in late 2020 and early 2021. Beside demographic questions and an agreement to participate in the survey, open-ended questions pertaining to their views about responsible tourism and the sustainability of tourism in the wake of COVID-10 were asked. The informants were also invited to join online conversation in order to provide more detailed information (Kendall, 2008).

Theoretical saturation was used as a procedure to ensure data collected from the sample were sufficient to propose a framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Hence, two phases of data collection were designed as shown in Figure 2. While the first 45 surveys were collected in late 2020, the second 25 surveys were received in early 2021. Considering the difference of cultures across the countries and the importance to capture actual meaning behind words, online discussions were held among SEARA members to facilitate team coding (Saldaña, 2009). Once data from the first phase were collected, open, axial and selective coding procedures in conjunction with thematic analysis were used to identify codes and themes pertaining to responsible tourism (Charmaz, 2006). A framework was then proposed. Data collected in the second phase were subsequently analysed to validate the framework (Ting et al., 2019). Inter-coder agreement was used as part of the validation check (Kurasaki, 2000). The entire coding and analytical process was manually done in iteration to ensure that the big picture was captured without losing sights of the details (John & Johnson, 2000; Turner et al., 2021).



**Figure 2: Flowchart and Two Phases of Data Collection**

## Findings

A total of seventy informants were sampled in Southeast Asia. Two phases of data collection were administered where 45 completed surveys were collected in the first phase and 25 in the second phase. However, no informant from Brunei and Laos was sampled in the process as shown in Table 1. Only one informant from Myanmar and one from Singapore responded to the survey. This section also shows the themes and the supporting quotes from the two phases of data collection before discussing the framework development.

**Table 1: Informant Profile**

Variables	Descriptions	Total Number (2 <sup>nd</sup> Phase)
Gender	Male	33 (10)
	Female	37 (15)
Age	20-30 years old	26 (10)
	31-40 years old	25 (8)
	41-50 years old	9 (4)
	51 years old and above	10 (3)
Country	Thailand	14 (8)
	Indonesia	13 (10)
	Cambodia	11 (7)
	Philippines	10 (7)
	Vietnam	10 (6)
	Malaysia	10 (7)
	Myanmar	1 (1)
	Singapore	1 (1)
Employment Status	Officials and Practitioners	36 (15)
	Professors and Lecturers	19 (6)
	Frequent Travellers	15 (4)

### *Economic Growth*

The data support the triple bottom line framework. Evidently, many countries, especially the developing ones, rely on tourism as a main source of earnings. Some derive more than a quarter of their GDP from tourism activities (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019). Responsible tourism is seen as a means to create jobs, improve income level as well as address structural inequality.

*“Tourism is one of the important factors as it contributes to economic growth and job creation as well [...] But to be able to maintain it in a long run, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism are needed.”*

*“Global tourism industry is one of the biggest industries in the world [...] as tourism encompasses many other sectors such as accommodation, adventure, and recreation, food and beverage, transportation, etc, and one of the most profitable industries in the world. Therefore, tourism plays a very important role in the economy.”*

### ***Socio-cultural Development***

The development of tourism and hospitality businesses that involve the local residents have not only led to multiplier effect on economic growth, but also more appreciation towards and inclusion of the local cultures and practices. Responsible actions promote healthy relationship between visitors and residents, and thus reinforce the social development of residents.

*“In the context of the tourism sector, responsibility is somehow associated with some values such as taking care of the place you visit, show consideration for people around you, being helpful when people around you need you, etc. This is quite important because it can ensure a friendly environment for everyone.”*

*“Tourism provides an excellent experience to understand and broaden one’s knowledge about and connection to people, culture, traditions, and landscape in the local community.”*

### ***Environmental Wellbeing***

The increasing number of travellers and visitors that could result in over-tourism has always been a concern in certain destinations or during peak seasons. It requires immediate attention and responsible actions to prevent the loss of resources. Hence, it highlights the need for competent personnel who can manage destinations and attractions effectively (Jamieson & Jamieson, 2019).

*“The current situation with our environment and social condition has called for us to be more responsible for our future’s sake [...] the environmental problems, such as waste, human impact on nature and floods are evident.”*

*“Tourism is one of the culprits that causes environmental pollution, and destroys the uniqueness and authenticity of the local community. Thus, responsible tourism is essential. It means that tourists must be more cautious and responsible for any action that may bring harm to the environment [...]”*

### ***Macro Level***

Responsible tourism can also be seen at the macro and micro levels. Notably, tourism has grown in terms of complexity and the operation scale. In order to strike balance between the objectives of economy, preservation and conservation of resources, and community wellbeing, holistic tourism planning is important (Costa, 2020), and so are the collective actions at the organisational level.

*“In my opinion, the more revenue one industry can generate, the more impact, either good or bad, it will have. [...] This is why tourism players must take responsibility and make mindful decisions at the strategic level. Secondly, in some countries, tourist is probably the main source of generating revenue, [...] effective management must be in place to avoid negative impact on the local environment.”*

*“For small countries like Singapore, pursuing responsible tourism is an ongoing exercise and an ideal aspiration. It is not about balancing the "good" with the "bad”*

*[...] Rather, it is about the responsiveness of our tourism system to meet the changing demands while maintaining our country as a suitable place to live in and visit”*

### **Micro Level**

Tourism development and recovery require responsible behaviour from all individuals concerned. While responsible tourism and sustainable tourism share a lot in common, the former emphasizes on decisions and actions one can take today to make a positive impact on the environment and society. This includes engaging in tourism activities mindfully to benefit the local communities in the long run (Hanafiah et al., 2021).

*“Travelling responsibly does not only have a positive impact on the destinations and communities we visit, but it provides us with enriching experiences that often stay with us in our memories. Travelling responsibly gives us an opportunity to learn through meaningful connections with local people and to get a better understanding of local cultural, as well as social and environmental issues.”*

*“Individually, responsible tourism is about changing individual attitudes towards traveling and what positive impact the person wants to create for the local community. [...] More importantly, supporting the local businesses such as homestays rather than big hotel chains or even joining the immersive tours to learn more about the rural communities.”*

### **Stakeholders**

Responsible tourism should be observed and understood through three lenses: stakeholders, priorities and contexts. It is not a universal term which applies to every situation without careful consideration of the specifics. As tourism is a multi-sector industry with a great variety of characteristics (Ibarnia et al., 2020), developing tourism responsibly concerns the cooperation among stakeholders and performing their respective roles effectively. The roles of government or policy makers (including tourism ministry and agencies), travel and tourism and hospitality organisations (including international and local practitioners, service providers, entrepreneurs and associations), tourists, educational institutions and local community (including host residents and community members in the suburbs or rural areas) are particularly mentioned to realize responsible tourism (Ibarnia et al., 2020; Yoon et al., 2019).

*“Responsible Tourism is everyone’s responsibility to create a healthy and sustainable travel and tourism ecosystem. It requires the policymakers to regulate the business environment, the host citizens to maintain and promote sustainable living and business practices and tourists to respect the culture and custom of the host destination.”*

*“Government, tourism practitioners (including employees), tourists, and the local community should work together for the sustainable development of tourism industry [...] Education plays a big part in nurturing responsible citizens and tourists.”*

It is worth noting that the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Program, driven by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is established to strengthen sustainability in the tourism sector by 2030. The focus is on the contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its purpose is to promote the initiatives for “people, planet and prosperity, namely public health, social inclusion, biodiversity conservation, climate action, circular economy and governance

and finance” (One Planet Network, 2022). In the same vein, Sustainable Hospitality Alliance is formed to help organisations run their businesses with long-term views and function in a responsible way towards all stakeholders in tourism through concrete measures and clear action plans. All these highlight the importance of multi-stakeholdership and effective partnership.

### **Priorities**

Responsible tourism is about identifying the important and urgent issues locally and addressing them as priorities. Practically speaking, not all matters are important, and not every important matter is urgent. Considering the constraints of time and resources, managing priorities in a given context is more pertinent and feasible. These priorities might also be the global issues that concern all people, but they have to be scrutinised and defined according to the local context to ensure its pragmatic validity. In addition to data collected from Southeast Asia, these priorities are assessed and labelled with reference to the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism (Goodwin, 2014). Using coding procedures and thematic analysis, ten priorities (in no particular order) are identified as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Priorities of Responsible Tourism in Southeast Asia**

<b>No</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Supporting Quotes</b>
1	Water Conservation	<p><i>“Most of the tourism and travel business and activities are still business-oriented and they did little to reduce the negative impacts on the environment, destination, local culture, and people. By trying to satisfy demands of tourists, more natural resources such as water and energy are used, leaving the local people in that area to suffer from water insufficiency for consumption [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“Another huge challenge is conserving water and managing waste. This is about how tourists will use water wisely in the hotel and how they dispose of waste when they travel. With the attitude that I can do whatever I like because “I paid for it”, the hotel practitioners need to find a way to educate the tourists to save water and manage waste responsibly.”</i></p>
2	Effective Energy Consumption	<p><i>“Tourism activities can be wasteful in terms of energy consumption during travel, food waste, and destruction of natural resources due to tourism development. This is an important factor that makes Responsible Tourism extremely important in the present day.”</i></p> <p><i>“[...] to develop tourism industry sustainably, it is critically essential to utilize resources effectively, not only in the present but also in the future [...] Now is the right time for tourism recovery [...] It is a good moment that makes us take a step back and look at what we have previously done in order to improve. This includes management of tourism destinations and the use of energy to reduce carbon footprint.”</i></p>
3	Waste Management	<p><i>“Tourism activities can be wasteful in terms of energy consumption during travel, food waste, and destruction of natural resources due to tourism development. This is an important factor that makes Responsible Tourism extremely important in the present day.”</i></p>

No	Priorities	Supporting Quotes
4	Climate Change and Pollution Prevention	<p><i>“Another huge challenge is conserving water and managing waste. This is about how tourists will use water wisely in the hotel and how they dispose of waste when they travel. With the attitude that I can do whatever I like because “I paid for it”, the hotel practitioners need to find a way to educate the tourists to save water and manage waste responsibly.”</i></p> <p><i>“Waste treatment and pollution, such as air, water, noise, have become big problems that there are obvious changes in global climate every year. The plastic waste, the damage done to forests, rivers, rice fields and beaches along with the killing of animals become so big issues that people seem to destroy their own living and environment for their own profit and for more investment and modernised development.”</i></p> <p><i>“Climate change which is contributed by tourism activities such as flight and ground transportation also plays a key role in the call for responsible tourism. Climate change impacts all countries and each individual; however, the vulnerability level varies. Though those who contribute to climate change the most are people from developed countries, the victims are those from poor countries. Mainly, people who are rich can afford to travel but those who are impacted by their travel are marginalized and vulnerable people.”</i></p>
5	Accessibility and Connectivity	<p><i>“Government should plan wisely and allocate budget to improve the road system and other related infrastructure in order to provide good access to most destinations [...] With the vast geographic condition, it is difficult to maintain the same level of tourism development throughout Indonesia. This is why accessibility becomes some kind of a problem. Access to remote areas and connection to rural community need attention.”</i></p> <p><i>“Traveling should no longer be limited to certain individuals but made available for senior citizens, families, children and people with disabilities. This can be seen with the facilities that are provided in some travel destinations such as toilets or parking lots for people with disabilities, changing rooms for parents with children, etc.”</i></p>
6	Community Building and Revitalization	<p><i>“Privatization of tourist destinations/assets should contribute to more local development [...] Community members need to be developed in terms of their capacity [...] Community building should be the focus of tourism development to ensure that a good percentage of income goes to the local development, infrastructure, such as school, hospital, access to clean water, etc. There should be a monitoring and evaluation system on tourism activities to ensure that local people are benefitted, and harms are minimized.”</i></p> <p><i>“Provide jobs to the locals, promote the local products, and cultures [...] This will help the growth of economy and the welfare of the community. When their lives are improved due to the benefits that tourism brings, it will address poverty, and human exploitation issues and revive the community.”</i></p>

No	Priorities	Supporting Quotes
7	Education and Continuous Learning	<p><i>“Constant learning is important for the local people in order to safeguard the well-being of the community as time passes. Hence, we need to provide education continuously to more people to increase their knowledge and at the same time raise their awareness about crucial issues that will impact their life and others.”</i></p> <p><i>“They (tourists) need more education about how to take care of the tourism destinations that they visit. It is not enough for us to visit a place once for our own sake, and not consider about others who also want to visit the same place [...] If the travel industry players keep learning, many 'less famous' areas can also be potentially developed.”</i></p>
8	Support to Local Business and Initiatives	<p><i>“Government should aim to increase the attractiveness of local businesses, such as homestays, cultural villages, conservation areas, national parks, to help organisations as well as communities who reside in these areas. Therefore, sufficient budget should be allocated to these places to promote local tourism and revive the tourism industry in Malaysia.”</i></p> <p><i>“For government and tourism agencies, they can come out with plans and initiatives to look after the development of rural destinations. Apart from government projects, this can be done by providing grants or funds to the relevant non-profit organisations so that they can do something to benefit the community.”</i></p>
9	Mindful Citizenship	<p><i>“It is vital to the tourism and travel industry to conduct the business with sound and ethical practices regardless of the role they play. In fact, the stakeholders should have an ethical and moral responsibility mindset. This mindset begins at home, school, and the workplace. This butterfly effect would have eventually had the impact on the community at large.”</i></p> <p><i>“The environmental resources are very limited, and our world is facing the big crisis of environmental problems. People are beginning to become more concerned about these, so they try to change their attitude and behaviour when they travel. When making decisions over activities, they will likely choose the activity that is friendly to others or has less negative impact on the environment.”</i></p>
10	Youth and Women Empowerment	<p><i>“To strengthen the development of tourist areas, the government and travel organisations can support young people to develop their own business and enterprise [...] to improve the old tourism model and establish markets with innovation to attract more foreign tourists.”</i></p> <p><i>“Encourage more women to involve directly in the tourism industry [...] It is time that the industry is also managed by the millennials and women. They can provide new ideas and innovation to develop the tourism industry, and eventually the country's economy [...] we have seen more and more capable women leading world's biggest companies.”</i></p>

The Cape Town Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations was organised by the Responsible Tourism Partnership and Western Cape Tourism in Johannesburg in 2002. Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism was subsequently made, recognising that “Responsible Tourism takes many forms, that different destinations and stakeholders will have different priorities, and that local policies and guidelines will need to be developed through multi-stakeholder processes to develop responsible tourism in destinations”. Based on the work of Goodwin (2014), Responsible Tourism (1) minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; (2) generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry; (3) involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances; (4) makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity; (5) provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues; (6) provides access for physically challenged people; and (7) is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

When looking at the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism and the ten priorities of responsible tourism in Southeast Asia, they are consistent in many ways. However, these ten priorities require further investigation and exposition, not only as a gauge to measure responsible behaviour and practices in various tourism activities, but also, and more importantly, as guidelines which tourism businesses can adopt and put into practice. In addition to the selected quotes as shown in Table 2, the data provide specific details about certain aspects of responsible tourism which can further elaborate what these priorities are and how responsibility can be exercised in those situations. For example, trust and respect should and can be instilled into students and employees through pragmatism in education and effective leadership respectively (for Mindful Citizenship). Moreover, roads and infrastructure should be well planned and constructed in suburbs and rural areas which are close to the tourism destinations so that the local community can be benefitted from the development (for Accessibility and Connectivity). Furthermore, tourism development which promises economic growth and political mileage at the expense of the local community is seen as mercenary. Community leaders and members are either not informed about the development or persuaded and even compelled to accept the deal on the table. It compromises the sense of community and members empowerment, which in turn, have a long-term repercussion on their identity, heritage and future generation (for Community Building and Revitalization).

### *Context*

As mentioned earlier, while sustainable development is universal, responsible tourism is about identifying priorities and how they should be addressed in a given context. For instance, cities and countryside in Southeast Asia which rely heavily on outbound tourism are severely hit by the widespread of COVID-19 as well as the subsequent travel restrictions. Notwithstanding the rolling out of vaccination programs globally, the situations in Southeast Asia and among the ten countries are different. Although all countries agree to devise policies and measures to ensure health and safety (Koh, 2020), their tourism recovery plan and operating procedures may not be entirely the same. In like manner, social issues which are important and urgent in a region may not be pertinent to another.

*“Tourism activities are about balance based on a destination’s characteristics. We clearly cannot have visitors visiting a destination without making any impact on it. We also cannot assume that it will be the same in everywhere they go. We can only mitigate or reduce the impact to some extent. Profit is obviously important for the economy, but the government should understand that it always comes with a price, and work out a holistic plan that takes all these factors into consideration.”*

*“More tourism businesses are concerned over socio-cultural and environmental degradations and unsustainable management of tourist destinations. As a result, they tailor their tour packages and activities to be more educational and beneficial to the environment and local people. They pay for ecosystem services and contribute to protecting those ecosystem services too. Additionally, they also support the non-governmental organisations to raise funds.”*

### **Action and Process**

The interplays among stakeholders, priorities and contexts are crucial to ensure that the prioritized issues and responsibility are managed effectively. In view of the complexity and dynamism of Southeast Asia, there is no template model or one-size-fits-all approach to address tourism issues in every country or destination. As such, the 3 Ins, namely *Initiation*, *Induction* and *Integration*, are proposed to demonstrate their organic relationship as shown in Table 3. Each of the them is an action and process itself; hence, they should be planned, implemented and monitored purposefully.

*Initiation* is described as the action to begin something. Although the pandemic halted the entire tourism and hospitality industry in the past two years, it is seen as an opportunity for tourism to reset and restart when normalcy begins to return. Every stakeholder plays a pivotal role in tourism recovery in a responsible manner in order to build the industry back better. For instance, governments need to review public regulations and the roles of enforcement to monitor health and safety procedures. Investors and businesspeople need to take the community and environmental welfare into consideration when planning and developing a tourism product (e.g., hotel) at a destination.

*Induction* is described as the action or process of bringing about or giving rise to something. Tourism development requires proper approaches and committed efforts from the stakeholders to minimize its negative impact and maximize its benefits. There is a rising need for tourism planning and management to be undertaken at the same priority level because one’s success is hinged on the others (Costa, 2020). Therefore, more avenues and platforms with equal standing should be created meaningfully to bring different minds together, engage in effective dialogue as well as commend and support one another.

*Integration* is described as the action or process to coordinate and form a functioning whole. One of the main obstacles to achieving SDGs is because the awareness of working together among stakeholders is relatively low (Özgit & Zhandildina, 2021). On one hand, the widespread of COVID-19 exposes the fragility of human conditional cooperation, on the other hand, it intensifies the need for tourism stakeholders to collaborate as a unified unit. Developing strategic alliance will accelerate information sharing and resource allocation more effectively as well as facilitate decision-making process for the good of the industry and community.

**Table 3: Action and Process**

No	Action	Supporting Quotes
1	Initiation	<p><i>“The stakeholders responsible to implement responsible tourism would be the public sector, private sector, tourists, and related non-profit organisations. The success of responsible tourism should be a tripartite or quad-partite relationship where all would need to start doing something to ensure the success of responsible tourism. This is especially so when goals of each party may not necessarily be aligned with one another.”</i></p> <p><i>“For the government, they need to convey the concept of being a responsible citizen to the society especially when they are traveling. Tourists need to be aware of the significance of playing their role as responsible citizens and aware that all their irresponsible actions during vacation could ruin the ecosystem of the destination in the long-term.”</i></p> <p><i>“Using this period (COVID-19) as a break from the usual hassle, it is a good time now to engage in deep discussions, recalibrate priorities and redeploy resources to make it happen. [...] It is about to start talking about it, creating awareness, pulling like-minded people together, and making plans to turn ideas into actions.”</i></p>
2	Induction	<p><i>“Tourism activities are about balance based on a destination’s characteristics. We clearly cannot have visitors visiting a destination without making any impact on it. We also cannot assume that it will be the same in everywhere they go. We can only mitigate or reduce the impact to some extent. Profit is obviously important for the economy, but the government should understand that it always comes with a price, and work out a holistic plan that takes all these factors into consideration.”</i></p> <p><i>“To encourage responsible practices among the stakeholders, there is a need to identify the specific behaviour that it wants to inculcate [...] Next, the mechanisms to develop this behaviour must be in place. It can be in the form of a reward system [...] an awareness creation campaign, or a policy. Finally, this is a technical perspective where the infrastructure supporting responsible tourism must be present. It could be a website, a portal, or even setting up a dedicated agency.”</i></p>
3	Integration	<p><i>“In my country, I think tour operators and government should work side by side to make tourism and travel activities sustainable and beneficial to the society. Tour operators themselves should be responsible and well-informed about activities they are organising. Meaning to say, they must always have proper research and practical knowledge about what they want to promote. They must never compromise profit over quality and should always show deep respect to any culture. [...] tour operators must comply to government regulations.”</i></p> <p><i>“In terms of educating society, the government can start from the school level. This can be done by explaining to society the relationship between humans and the environment. By highlighting the association</i></p>

*between both parties, society will be more aware of the long-term advantages of practicing responsible tourism.”*

*“All stakeholders play important roles and are pivotal to tourism development. The solid bond created by this mutual trust and respect will benefit the tourism development for the long run. In Indonesia, this collaboration has started, initiated by the government, where the Ministry of Tourism works together with the higher education institutions to develop tourism villages as the main platform for community-based tourism.”*

## **Foundations**

When providing justification to their response, the informants made mention of certain attributes, values and underlying rationale. As such, the term *Foundations* is used to describe the basis for managing priorities in a responsible manner as shown in Table 4. For the stakeholders to contribute to tourism development effectively, the joint purpose of value creation will likely drive them to look into environmental and social benefits while maintaining their economic interests (Freudenreich et al., 2020). Moreover, active engagement and consultation with the locals are important to gain their trust and support. Particularly, community involvement in tourism planning as a core of sustainable development and responsible action is paramount to businesses working with their stakeholders. In other words, development of strategies and approaches must be directed towards the alignment of the desires and customs of the community since tourism activities depend much on local hospitality (Mak et al., 2017). Furthermore, strong relationships and excellent communication among stakeholders (Tiago et al., 2021) and innovation in service delivery (Liu et al., 2019) will enhance community’s acceptance of tourism development and the manner it is done.

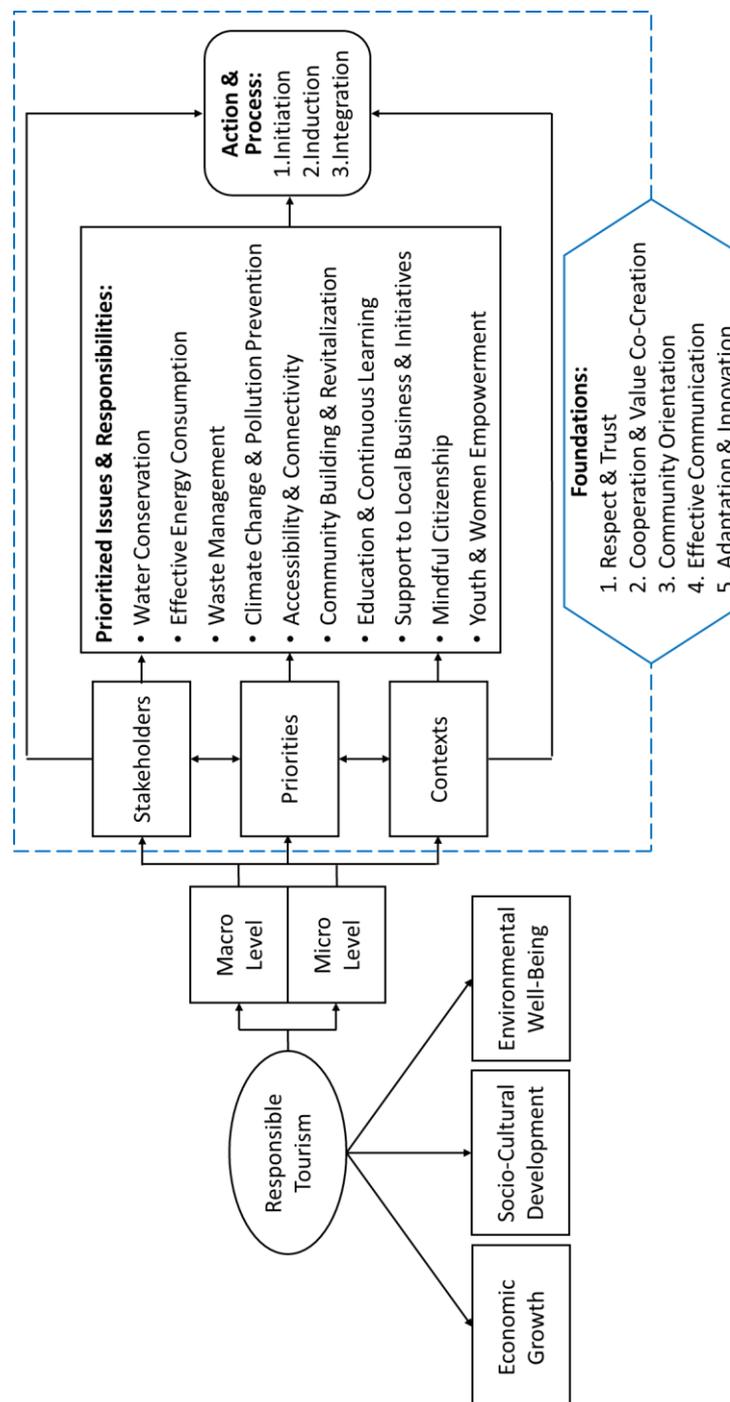
**Table 4: Foundations**

<b>No</b>	<b>Foundations</b>	<b>Supporting Quotes</b>
1	Respect and Trust	<p><i>“This collaboration can last long on the basis of mutual understanding, trust, and respect towards one another. All stakeholders play important roles and are pivotal to tourism development. The solid bond created by this mutual trust and respect will benefit the tourism development for the long run.”</i></p> <p><i>“Being a responsible tourist for me is to respect the culture of the place, to support local people as much as possible, respect their homelands, and enjoy everything locally.”</i></p>
2	Cooperation and Value Co-creation	<p><i>“Developing actionable Responsible Tourism policy with a holistic partnership approach in form of Public-Private-Community-Partnership (PPCP) is key for promoting and pushing proper implementation for sustainable tourism development in Cambodia.”</i></p> <p><i>“The key is collaboration. In this trying time, playing solo will get us nowhere. Tourism must create value especially to the local/host communities, the environment, and the economy. The value co-creation will be beneficial to the host community as they receive economy as well as education benefits from the tourism activities.”</i></p>

No	Foundations	Supporting Quotes
3	Community Orientation	<p><i>“The most important thing is to listen to the community, care for their well-being and understand what are the dos and don’ts. Work with them and take them as important as other stakeholders. Only then we can achieve harmony and build a strong foundation and sustainability not only for this generation but many generations to come.”</i></p> <p><i>“To enhance the well-being of the community, the local people and sustainable tourist destinations should be the centre of the planning. The local people should actively involve in planning, managing, and protecting the tourist destinations. Capacity building on tourist destination management, culinary skills, and hospitality should be provided to the local people. Furthermore, the tourists should consume the services/products provided by the local people.”</i></p> <p><i>“We have several cases related to the impact of (ir)responsible tourism in Vietnam such as in Sapa, up North of Vietnam. The arrival of tourists has changed this little town in a way that makes the minorities’ life becoming unconventional. Some families quit their long-valued traditional craft art and become street vendors just because they think they can make more money with tourists.”</i></p>
4	Effective Communication	<p><i>“There are some barriers in communication when implementing responsible practices, such as no clear government policy regarding implementation of recycling. Not every layer of community has the same understanding of responsible tourism and what to do about it.”</i></p> <p><i>“In an international economy that is interdependent and connected with one another, business travel is an important aspect of today's commerce environment. [...] In the process, it brings people together that reduces miscommunication, and encourage the sense of unity.”</i></p> <p><i>“COVID-19 [...] changes how people communicate, work, travel and etc. [...] Using this period (COVID-19) as a break from the usual hassle, it is a good time now to engage in deep discussions, recalibrate priorities and redeploy resources to make it happen. [...] It is about to start talking about it, creating awareness, pulling like-minded people together, and making plans to turn ideas into actions.”</i></p>
5	Adaptation and Innovation	<p><i>“For a country like Singapore, incorporating responsible tourism is a challenge. Hence, Singapore has to innovate within its constraints by embodying the intent of responsible tourism within the attractions.”</i></p> <p><i>“The COVID-19 certainly is bad for everyone, especially for the hospitality and tourism industry. [...] small travel businesses, low-quality travel companies, big travel businesses that fail to take action will eventually be removed. Only those that can act quickly, manage a crisis well, and adapt to rapid change can survive. Besides, I also can spot a movement in wellness and natural-based tourism. These kinds of tourism activities are growing fast among other types. While there might be nothing else good for the time being, this seems to be a good sign showing at the end of the day, there are still some hopes.”</i></p>

### Framework

While sustainable tourism is said to work in a local-global relationship, the local aspect is better realized through responsible tourism. It is put forward that responsible tourism is more individualized, and voluntary. Rather than serving as a regulative framework, responsible tourism promotes the role of each stakeholder and their respective actions (Saarinen, 2021). Our findings also suggest that responsible tourism can function at the organizational level and that individual action can be integrated as a collective effort in the process to achieve the desired outcome. As shown in Figure 3, the Southeast Asia Responsible Tourism (SEART) framework is proposed to articulate the salient themes and their relationships in this region.



**Figure 3: Southeast Asia Responsible Tourism (SEART) Framework**

	Stakeholders	Priorities	Context
Initiation	Who are they? What are their roles?	What matters? What is <b>important</b> ?	What is the issue?
Induction	Who else is involved? What to bring about?	Which to do first? Which is <b>urgent</b> ?	Which approach is appropriate?
Integration	Who to collaborate? How to collaborate?	How to commit? How <b>significant</b> is it?	How to sustain it?

**Figure 4: SEART Matrix**

There are several ways to interpret SEART Framework. One of them is through a matrix as shown in Figure 4. Similar to Eisenhower's (1954) Urgent-Important Matrix, SEART Matrix is a preliminary tool for managing priorities and focusing on what matters in a given context more effectively. While importance (how much) and urgency (how soon) remain essential to decision-making process, significance (how long) is included to the matrix to provide an added dimension to the process. It implies longevity and thus sustainability of the action over a period of time. Moreover, the matrix provides quadrants and their respective guidelines according to three phases of the process (i.e., initiation, induction and integration) to help determine the needed actions to realize responsible tourism in the local setting. SEART Matrix is still a work in progress. It is our attempt to make responsible tourism actionable and substantial in Southeast Asia, and we welcome inputs from tourism scholars and practitioners alike.

## Conclusion

The implementation of sustainable practices to achieve sustainability is what makes responsible tourism *important*, *urgent* and *significant*. As a call to action, responsible tourism includes, among others, the change of attitude and behaviour of tourism players (Farmaki et al., 2014; Ting et al., 2020), moral responsibility towards the local environment, economy and society (Paskova & Zelenka, 2019), supporting education to women and generating shared value among tourism stakeholders and community members (Camilleri, 2016; Vukovic et al., 2021) as well as maximizing the positive impacts of tourism development (Frey & George, 2010). Despite being a preliminary work, the SEART Framework has provided a holistic view of what responsible tourism is and how it should be implemented in the Southeast Asian context; in particular, it highlights our immediate attention to *change of behaviour*, *individual and collective action* and *effective partnership or collaboration*.

Understanding the concept of responsible tourism, however, does not mean practicing it. Education, leadership, purposeful initiatives, success stories and encouragement by public figures are all useful to transform responsible tourism knowledge into practice (Musavengane,

2019). We opine that tourism development and recovery should always be planned, assessed and perpetuated through the assessment of stakeholders, priorities and contexts in three phases. This correspond to the incessant calls for more research to focus on the involvement and collaboration of diverse bodies in tourism networks in various contexts (Camilleri, 2018; Cassia et al., 2021; Mody et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2019; Sin, 2010). We also point out the five foundations for addressing issues and managing priorities in the SEART Framework. These foundations, which are often overlooked, determine the success of the actions towards the priorities. To conclude, we hope our viewpoints offer some insights about responsible tourism in Southeast Asia and inspire our readers to use tourism development and recovery as a means to rebuild our society in a responsible manner.

## References

- Brahmasrene, T., & Lee, J. W. (2017). Assessing the dynamic impact of tourism, industrialization, urbanization, and globalization on growth and environment in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, 24(4), 362–371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2016.1238021>
- Butler, R. (2015). Sustainable tourism – paradoxes, inconsistencies and a way forward? In M. Hughes, D. Weaver, & C. Pforr (Eds.), *The Practice of Sustainable Tourism* (pp. 88–102). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315796154>
- Camilleri, M. A. (2016). Responsible tourism that creates shared value among stakeholders. *Tourism Planning and Development*, 13(2), 219–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1074100>
- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The Tourism Industry: An Overview. In *Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product*. *Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management* (pp. 3–27). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49849-2\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49849-2_1)
- Cassia, F., Castellani, P., Rossato, C., & Baccarani, C. (2021). Finding a way towards high-quality, accessible tourism: the role of digital ecosystems. *TQM Journal*, 33(1), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2020-0062>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. SAGE Publications.
- Cheer, J. M., Ting, H., & Leong, C.-M. (2021). Responsible Tourism: A New Era of Responsibility? *Journal of Responsible Tourism Management*, 1(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.47263/jrtm.01-01-01>
- Costa, C. (2020). Tourism planning: a perspective paper. *Tourism Review*, 75(1), 198–202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-09-2019-0394>
- Eisenhower, D. D., Peters, G., & Woolley, J. T. (1954). Address at the second assembly of the world council of churches, Evanston, Illinois.
- Farmaki, A., Constanti, P., Yiasemi, I., & Karis, P. (2014). Responsible tourism in Cyprus: The rhetoric and the reality. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 6(1), 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-10-2013-0041>
- Freudenreich, B., Lüdeke-Freund, F., & Schaltegger, S. (2020). A Stakeholder Theory Perspective on Business Models: Value Creation for Sustainability. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 166, 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04112-z>

- Frey, N., & George, R. (2010). Responsible tourism management: The missing link between business owners' attitudes and behaviour in the Cape Town tourism industry. *Tourism Management, 31*(5), 621–628. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.06.017>
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. SAGE Publications.
- Goodwin, H. (2012). *There is a Difference between Sustainable and Responsible Tourism*. <https://haroldgoodwin.info/there-is-a-difference-between-sustainable-and-responsible-tourism/>
- Goodwin, H. (2014). *Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism*. <https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/cape-town-declaration-on-responsible-tourism/>
- Granek, L., & Nakash, O. (2016). The Impact of Qualitative Research on the “Real World”: Knowledge Translation as Education, Policy, Clinical Training, and Clinical Practice. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 56*(4), 414–435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167815574623>
- Hanafiah, M. H., Jamaluddin, M. R., & Riyadi, A. (2021). Local community support, attitude and perceived benefits in the UNESCO World Heritage Site. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 11*(1), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-03-2020-0034>
- Ibarnia, E., Garay, L., & Guevara, A. (2020). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the travel supply chain: A literature review. *Sustainability, 12*(23), 10125. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su122310125>
- Jamieson, W., & Jamieson, M. (2019). Overtourism management competencies in Asian urban heritage areas. *International Journal of Tourism Cities, 5*(4), 581–597. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-08-2019-0143>
- John, W. S., & Johnson, P. (2000). The pros and cons of data analysis software for qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 32*(4), 393–397. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2000.00393.x>
- Kendall, L. (2008). The conduct of qualitative interview: research questions, methodological issues, and researching online. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. J. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on New Literacies* (pp. 133–149). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Koh, E. (2020). The end of over-tourism? Opportunities in a post-Covid-19 world. *International Journal of Tourism Cities, 6*(4), 1015–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-04-2020-0080>
- Kurasaki, K. S. (2000). Intercoder Reliability for Validating Conclusions Drawn from Open-Ended Interview Data. *Field Methods, 12*(3), 179–194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X0001200301>
- Liu, Y., Li, C., McCabe, S., & Xu, H. (2019). How small things affect the big picture?: The effect of service product innovation on perceived experience value. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 31*(7), 2994–3014. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2017-0655>

- Luo, Y., Lanlung (Luke), C., Kim, E., Tang, L. R., & Song, S. M. (2018). Towards quality of life: the effects of the wellness tourism experience. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 35(4), 410–424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2017.1358236>
- Mak, B. K. L., Cheung, L. T. O., & Hui, D. L. H. (2017). Community participation in the decision-making process for sustainable tourism development in rural areas of Hong Kong, China. *Sustainability*, 9(10), 1695. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9101695>
- Mody, M., Day, J., Sydnor, S., Jaffe, W., & Lehto, X. (2014). The different shades of responsibility: Examining domestic and international travelers' motivations for responsible tourism in India. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 12(1), 113–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2014.09.008>
- Moscardo, G., & Murphy, L. (2014). There is no such thing as sustainable tourism: Re-conceptualizing tourism as a tool for sustainability. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 6(5), 2538–2561. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su6052538>
- Musavengane, R. (2019). Small hotels and responsible tourism practice: Hoteliers' perspectives. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 220, 786–799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.02.143>
- Nguyen, T. Q. T., Young, T., Johnson, P., & Wearing, S. (2019). Conceptualising networks in sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 32(September), 100575. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100575>
- One Planet Network. (2022). *Tools and Initiatives to Support a Responsible Recovery to Build back better Tourism*. <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/covid-19-responsible-recovery/tools-and-resources>
- Özgit, H., & Zhandildina, D. (2021). Investigating stakeholder awareness of the sustainable development goals and tourism stakeholder collaboration: the case of North Cyprus. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 13(4), 498–509. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-02-2021-0027>
- Paskova, M., & Zelenka, J. (2019). How crucial is the social responsibility for tourism sustainability? *Social Responsibility Journal*, 15(4), 534–552. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-03-2018-0057>
- Pope, J., Wessels, J. A., Douglas, A., Hughes, M., & Morrison-Saunders, A. (2019). The potential contribution of environmental impact assessment (EIA) to responsible tourism: The case of the Kruger National Park. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 32(November 2018), 100557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100557>
- Saarinen, J. (2021). Is being responsible sustainable in tourism? Connections and critical differences. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13(12), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126599>
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researcher*. SAGE Publications.
- Scheyvens, R., & Hughes, E. (2019). Can tourism help to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”? The challenge of tourism addressing SDG1. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(7), 1061–1079. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2018.1551404>
- Sharpley, R. (2003). Rural tourism and sustainability-a critique. In D. R. Hall, L. Roberts, & M. Mitchell (Eds.), *New directions in rural tourism* (pp. 38–53). Ashgate. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315248097>

- Sin, H. L. (2010). Who are we responsible to? Locals' tales of volunteer tourism. *Geoforum*, 41(6), 983–992. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.08.007>
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Tiago, F., Gil, A., Stemberger, S., & Borges-Tiago, T. (2021). Digital sustainability communication in tourism. *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge*, 6(1), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2019.12.002>
- Ting, C. Y., Ismail, M. B., Ting, H., Bahri, S. B., Sidek, A. B., Idris, S. F. B., ... & Sohot, M. S. B. (2019). Consumer behaviour towards pharmaceutical products: A model development. *International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing*, 13(3), 387-402.
- Ting, H., Jean, L. X., Meng, L. C., Cheah, J. H., & Cheer, J. M. (2020). Editorial – responsible tourism: A call to action for turbulent times. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 10(2), ix–xxi. <https://doi.org/10.14707/ajbr.200080>
- Ting, H., Morrison, A., Leong, C. M., Kumarusamy, R., & Leong, Q. L. (2021). Responsibility, Responsible Tourism and Our Response. *Journal of Responsible Tourism Management*, 1(2), 1-9.
- Turner, D., Ting, H., Wong, M. W., Lim, T-Y., & Tan, K. L. (2021). Applying Qualitative Approach in Business Research. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 11(3), 1-13.
- Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 27(3), 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.12.004>
- Vukovic, D. B., Petrovic, M., Maiti, M., & Vujko, A. (2021). Tourism development, entrepreneurship and women's empowerment – Focus on Serbian countryside. *Journal of Tourism Futures*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-10-2020-0167>
- Yoon, A., Jeong, D., Chon, J., & Yoon, J. H. (2019). A study of consumers' intentions to participate in responsible tourism using message framing and appeals. *Sustainability*, 11(3), 865. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030865>



All papers are published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). For more details, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.