



Sustainable Tourism Development in the Content of Curricula in Georgia and Other Foreign Countries (Comparative Study and Analysis)

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Abstract

In recent years, sustainable development has become an important part of educational systems, from schools to universities, making it a societal priority. In 2019, UNESCO adopted the ESD for 2030 framework with the overall objective of building "a more just and sustainable world through the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals." The Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework identifies five priority action areas: policy, education and training settings, educators, youth, and communities.

Sustainable tourism development has been a commonly used term for many years and is, therefore, an important concept for consideration within tourism degree courses/programs. Based on qualitative research and a case study method, the article discusses several undergraduate and graduate programs in the context of teaching sustainable tourism, comparing them with the experience of the Georgian Technical University. It is now in its fourth year of implementing an innovative and challenging undergraduate educational program, "Mountain Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Management."

In conclusion, it can be said that sustainable tourism programs are becoming more and more in demand, but the Georgian Technical University program, on an international scale, has no analog and is unique. At the same time, the results indicate that in many cases, sustainability pedagogy/teaching methods and approaches such as systems and holistic thinking are not yet widely used and are still being developed.

Keywords: Sustainability, Education, Sustainable tourism, mountain, tourism curricula

Introduction

Sustainability is a new challenge for the entire world, which has become significant from the XX-XXI centuries, as evidenced by several international agreements. Tourism stands out as one of the main economic sectors globally, generating important social benefits. Recognized for its potential to contribute to achieving many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tourism plays a crucial role in areas such as job creation, sustainable consumption and production, and the conservation of natural resources.

The tourism sector is explicitly mentioned in and called upon to deliver on three of the SDGs (Romeo et al., 2021):

- SDG 8, focuses on the promotion of "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all";
- SDG 12, aims to "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" and to "develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism, which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products";
- SDG 14, which seeks to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development."

Accelerating climate action (SDG 13) in tourism is of utmost importance for the resilience of the tourism sector, highly vulnerable to climate change, while also contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

The cross-cutting nature of tourism and its role in achieving the SDGs in mountain regions (Romeo et al., 2021):

- SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Tourism can contribute to the economic resilience of mountain communities dependent on agriculture. It can also enhance the inclusiveness and sustainability of mountain settlements by supporting the conservation of natural resources and providing jobs for youth and women.

- SDG 15 – Life on Land. Since natural ecosystems and biodiversity, including mountains, rivers, and lakes, are prime tourism assets, the sector offers considerable opportunities for their conservation if managed sustainably. Destinations are increasingly aware of the mutually beneficial relationship between the conservation of natural ecosystems and tourism revenues.
- SDG 17 – Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. Developing sustainable tourism in the mountains requires reducing its negative environmental and social impacts and addressing the challenges posed by climate change.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted using materials provided by research papers, literature reviews, and websites. The study took place from the 1st of July to the 1st of August, during which all educational programs related to sustainable development in tourism were examined (searched on Google). Additionally, a qualitative study of curricula was undertaken.

Main Text

In September 2015, world leaders unanimously adopted a new framework document, a global announcement for action. The 17 goals of sustainable development obligate states to ensure the achievement of 169 goals by 2030, aiming to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, address climate change, and promote peace and well-being for all inhabitants (United Nations Georgia n.d.).

The fourth goal of sustainable development aims to achieve inclusive and equal education, providing lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal, set for 2030, includes:

Providing affordable and high-quality technical, professional, secondary, and higher education.

Increasing the number of young people and adults with appropriate skills for decent work and entrepreneurship.

Ensuring that all pupils acquire knowledge and skills, including sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, to promote sustainable development.

Due to the necessity to provide education on sustainable development, UNESCO adopted the Education Sustainable Development for 2030 framework in 2019. It identifies priority action areas, including education and training settings, educators, youth (with policy and communities too) (Education for Sustainable Development. UNESCO. n.d.).

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted on sustainable development education issues. Our research highlights two important

directions: Mountain Sustainable Development (Ueno et al., 2020) and Tourism Sustainable Development (Boluk et al., 2021) (Balsiger & Price, 2020). Besides these, global experiences are also studied.

Researchers from Japan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Ueno et al., 2020) identified 28 program opportunities for mountain studies as education for Sustainable Mountain Development (ESMD). These programs were implemented by universities, research institutes, or NGOs, individually or collaboratively, with various teaching and learning settings.

The journal "Mountain Research and Development" plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development in the world's mountains. Published by the International Mountain Society (IMS), it is the leading international scientific journal devoted specifically to this subject.

While research on sustainable tourism educational programs in the field of tourism is lacking, it is essential to note UNWTO's special activity in education. The platform "Tourism for SDGs" provides information about the research, including "Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals. The Role of Latin American Universities: Results, Progress and New Challenges, 2023."

Based on survey results applied to university tourism degree courses in Argentina and Brazil, it was found that, although sustainability is included in every tourism course, there is still no concrete application of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 goals and 169 targets. Research on the teaching of sustainable development in tourism remains relevant, especially considering tourism's significance for many mountain economies, including Georgia, where a significant portion of the territory is mountainous.

Research Findings

The results of the research are demonstrated in Table 1, which focuses on the international experience of master's programs in the field of sustainable tourism, and Table 2, which outlines the international experience of bachelor's programs in the same field.

Table 1. International experience of master's programs in the field of sustainable tourism

#	Title of program and Study language	University /country	Duration and ECT credits	Description of program	Note
1	The Master Program: Design of Sustainable Tourism Systems in English (University of Florence. Italy, Florence. School of Economics and Management, n.d).	University of Florence Italy, Florence School of Economics and Management	2 years =120 credits	<p>Program is characterized by an interdisciplinary program. The graduates will acquire the basic competence in the fields of human and social sciences, a good command of information technology and of statistical techniques, indispensable for a real-world interpretation of tourism trends and of taste changes of the tourist population. The Master Program also provides legislative, historical and geographical knowledge useful for enhancing the values of the resources and the cultural heritage of a territory.</p> <p>The Master Program deals with topics related with the sustainable management of natural, cultural and historical resources. The remarkable growth of tourism requires considerable planning activities by both the public and private sectors in order to maximise economic returns while containing the potential negative impacts on the environment.</p>	
2	MSc in Climate Adaptation Governance, in English (MSc in Climate	University of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Netherlan	1year=60 credits	Within this program, you can follow a track on sustainable tourism, or specialize in the governance of climate adaptation. Either way leads to a Master of	

	Adaptation Governance, n.d.)	ds		Science degree. During the program, you will follow courses on Place, Regions & Identities; Fieldwork Cultural Geography; Adaptation Governance; Nature, Landscape & Heritage; Culture & Community-Based Adaptation; Qualitative Research Methods; Urban Adaptation & Innovation; and Social Impact Assessment.	
3	MSc in Master of Science in Tourism and Sustainability in English (Master of Science in Tourism and Sustainability , n.d)	Linnaeus University Kalmar, Sweden	2 years = 120 credits	This Master's program gives you in-depth knowledge about how to evaluate tourism and plan for future tourism from a sustainability perspective. The main field of study: Tourism Studies. As a globally leading business industry, the tourism industry has to take responsibility for the planet's limitations. This Master's program Tourism and Sustainability provides you with an insight into the paramount challenges that face the tourism industry's development and our world. You will acquire skills that enable you to grapple with important and often contradictory trajectories of tourism and its sustainable future. This can be, for instance, how tourists often seek the pristine, the authentic, or the genuine, while in doing so also burdening destinations and travel systems through unsustainable patterns of practices and carbon dioxide emissions. On a larger scale, it is not only	

				<p>the tourism industry that is under threat but also the world as we know it. Therefore, the most central question we ask ourselves in the Master's program in Tourism and Sustainability is – how do we create the tourism industry of the future?</p>	
4.	<p>Master's Degree in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism, in Italian (Master's Degree in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism, n.d)</p>	<p>University of Cagliari Cagliari, Italy</p>	<p>2 years = 120 credits</p>	<p>The Master's Degree Course in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism (MMTS) aims to train managers specializing in the monitoring, acquisition, processing, and interpretation of tourism data and processes with a view to sustainable development. Through a multidisciplinary training course in the economic, managerial, anthropological, environmental, IT-statistical and legal fields, the outgoing professional figures will be able to carry out consultancy and support activities for decision-making processes, in the public and private sectors, and to assume roles management and management in companies.</p>	
5	<p>MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management, in English (MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management, n.d.)</p>	<p>ESDES Lyon Business School, France</p>	<p>13 months</p>	<p>The MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management provides strategic visions of ESG-focused practices and enables students to generate sustainable solutions, whilst combatting the environmental and societal challenges faced by the tourism and events industries. Students will be thoroughly versed in socio-</p>	<p>The exact number of credits in unknown</p>

				<p>economic impacts, sustainability-based marketing, and management along with ideal practices for the planning of deliverables in these sectors.</p> <p>The 13-month program will be based in Esdes Business School's campus in Annecy and students will also benefit from 2 field trips to enhance their learning experience. At the end of the course, students will have acquired the necessary skills to determine the best impactful initiatives for working in the Hospitality sector.</p>	
6	<p>International Master Program (MSc) in "Sustainable tourism Development: Heritage, Environment, Society" (Sustainable Tourism Development: Heritage, Environment, Society, n.d.)</p>	<p>Harokopio University of Athens, the Institute of Research, Higher Studies in Tourism (IREST) of the University of Paris I - Panthéon Sorbonne, the Department of Business Administration of the University of the Aegean</p>	<p>12 months = 60 credits</p>	<p>The diploma that is offered at Harokopio University of Athens and the one that is offered at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University are two separate and independent diplomas. The Programme focuses on the provision of high-level qualifications for professions related to Tourism Science and Heritage. The subject of the Master's Programme is the provision of specialized studies in the scientific field of Sustainable Tourism Development through heritage. In particular, it aims at the specialized training of postgraduate students in subjects related to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 01. Sustainable Development of Tourism 02. Areas related to Tourism and Culture 03. Cultural Tourism 04. Heritage Management 	<p>The Master's Programme is a double degree Programme that results in the award of two diplomas to the student, according to the 15th Special Interinstitutional Committee of 22.03.2021 and to the provisions of the article 34 of the Law 4485/2017. The Master Program is a full-time program made up of two (2) academic semesters (12 months).</p>

				and Marketing 05. Development and Management of Tourist Destinations 06. Economy of Tourism 07. Environmental Protection of Tourist Areas	
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Note. Authors, according to the research

Table 2. International experience of bachelors' programs in the field of sustainable tourism

#	Title of program and Study language	University /country	Duration and ECT credits	Description of program	Note
1	BA (Hons) Business Management (Tourism) in English (BA (Hons) Business Management (Tourism) n.d.)	Arden Study Centre, ARDEN University, Berlin, Germany	You have 3-9 years to complete this course, which means you can take up to 3 years to complete each level. Most of our students, however, aim to complete the course within 3 to 6 years.	Arden University's BA (Hons) Business Management (Tourism)) is for those seeking to develop professional skills and insider knowledge of the tourism industry. The course offers you the foundation you need to manage or start a business in the field, with a curriculum that enforces a range of transferable, relevant business skills. You will develop business skills and understanding specific to tourism management that will enable you to respond to specific industry requirements in national and international contexts. The course will approach several aspects of the tourism industry and how to manage them in a business setting, such as national and international travel, understanding the tourism environment, contemporary issues in tourism management and sustainable tourism management. It will also tackle	Berlin or Online. Full support both online and on-site. The exact number of credits in unknown

				<p>fundamental business elements, such as finance, marketing, business processes and business analysis. Students can expect to acquire valuable skills such as personnel management, entrepreneurship and the ability to analyse and interpret written, visual and graphical data to improve business performance.</p>	
2	<p>Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Tourism Management in English (Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Tourism Management. n.d)</p>	<p>Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia</p>	4 years	<p>The program aims to prepare professionals/managers in the field of sustainable tourism management, who will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Know the theoretical and methodological system of sustainable tourism; •Design principles and strategical programs for sustainable tourism development; •Organize tourism activities; •Apply theoretical knowledge, practical abilities and skills in line with current trends and requirements of the tourism industry; •Manage tourism in all its dimensions on the base of principles of sustainable tourism; •Think critically, creatively and innovatively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support global sustainability. <p>Learning Outcomes According to the program aims the students will have the following learning outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To analyze and to evaluate the place and role of tourism in the structure and 	<p>The exact number of credits is unknown</p>

				<p>development of the society;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To know the principles of a service organization in tourism activities; •To identify the structural peculiarities of tourism in the field of service from the point of view of sustainable tourism; •To design organizational programs for the tourism industry; •To carry out research in the field of tourism from the point of view of sustainability; •To evaluate the tourism industry, infrastructure and resources; •To design and implement sustainable tourism programs; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To develop strategic directions for sustainable tourism development and improvement; •To manage sustainable tourism projects; •To have a systemized understanding of interdisciplinary patterns of sustainable tourism (economics, geography and environmental science, sociology, etc.) •To establish and manage a touristic business in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism. 	
3	Sustainable Tourism and Business; in Portuguese (Sustainable Tourism and Business. n.d.)	ISPGAY vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal	6 semesters = 180 credits	<p>The Degree in Tourism and Sustainable Business at ISPGAYA provides markedly practical and experimental training, based on the theoretical knowledge necessary for professional practice. It promotes inter and multidisciplinary training in</p>	

				<p>various domains, through the transmission of solid technical knowledge about human intervention and tourist activity, valuing the understanding of the intercultural dimension and its interactions in the most diverse sectoral domains of the economy and society, capable of promoting the realization of sustainable tourism business. Future tourism professionals are asked to have an awareness, and a critical attitude, about the ethical, environmental and legal guidelines that frame the best practices used for the implementation and sustainable management of tourism development projects. Companies in the sector face the challenge of adapting to new competitiveness factors due to globalization, the new world order, pandemic crises, energy crises, climate change, among others.</p>	
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<p>4.</p>	<p>Online Bachelor of Arts in Global Sustainable Tourism in English (Online Bachelor of Arts in Global Sustainable Tourism. n.d.)</p>	<p>Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, USA</p>	<p>4 years;</p>	<p>Worldwide, the impacts of tourism on the natural environment are under increasing scrutiny and demand for restraint and solutions. The World Tourism Organization, as well as the World Travel and Tourism Council, have explicitly called for increased focus on sustainability when creating policies and managing global tourism. There is an urgent need to protect the resources that attract tourists to destinations around the globe. The recent pandemic has caused the world to notice that destinations such as Venice and Amsterdam, if allowed to recover from over-tourism through more sustainable practices, can and will do so. In our state of Florida, there is increased pressure to protect our natural attractions which include the state's 825 miles of beaches, the Everglades, the Keys, coral reefs, springs, and mangroves. Other alarming events such as red tide, climate change, and sea-level rise, and extreme storm events have all raised awareness of the vulnerability of the tourism industry both locally and abroad.</p> <p>This innovative degree recognizes the importance of sustainable operations in the tourism industry today, its impacts on the planet, and the increasing demand for a more sustainable</p>	<p>Distance Learning, Full time, Part time;</p> <p>A non-European system of calculating credits</p>
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				<p>approach to managing hospitality and tourism businesses. This unique, fully-online program, offered through the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, is an interdisciplinary collaboration with the Department of Earth and Environment of the College of Arts, Science, and Education and features a blended curriculum composed of the most-relevant existing courses from each department as well as a host of new courses specifically designed for the degree.</p> <p>Students pursuing this degree will acquire the knowledge and tools needed to become industry leaders in the management of sustainable tourism standards that will help protect the world's natural and cultural resources and maintain them intact for future generations. Students will learn to apply these skills and lead through advocacy, conservation, and community partnerships. Topics covered include socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural impacts with respect to responsible business practices and local governance. In a nutshell, the overarching thrust of the program is to teach students how tourism can adapt to and mitigate climate change and become a key sector in the transition to low-carbon economies.</p>	
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Note. Authors, according to the research

The collected data indicates that Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Greece, Germany, Armenia, Portugal, and the USA are countries that offer opportunities to study tourism and sustainable development. However, the bachelor's program at the Faculty of Sustainable Development of Mountains at the Georgian Technical University, named "Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Hospitality Management," is distinct from these programs. The curriculum covers subjects related to mountain tourism and hospitality, training courses on mountain knowledge and safe tourism, as well as economics and business.

The structure of the educational program provides numerous opportunities for students:

The program has a duration of 4 years, with 240 ECTS, full-time, and is taught in Georgian.

Students learn fundamental subjects, business, and tourism and hospitality industry subjects.

They study sustainable development and its principles, including sustainable mountain development.

The curriculum includes subjects specifically related to mountains.

Students undergo field practice and write a Bachelor's thesis.

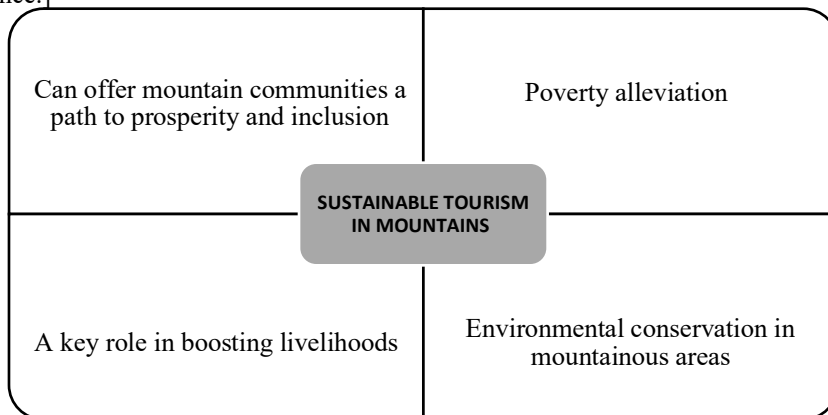
The program offers the unique opportunity to study at least two foreign languages.

Subjects are classified into three pillars: Obligatory and obligatory elective; Optional/elective; Free credits.

This course is unique in the Georgian educational system and has garnered significant interest from students. It is fully funded by the government as a priority direction. The management team of the program plans to introduce a master's program and collaborate with other universities worldwide. The connection between sustainable development and mountain tourism is crucial. The close relationship is explained by the positive impact mountain tourism sustainable development can bring to the region and overall sustainable development, as supported by UNWTO approaches (see

Figure 1. Mountain Tourism Sustainable Development).

[Note: Since I cannot view or analyze visual content like figures, I don't have specific details about Figure 1, but you may describe or provide information about it if you need further assistance.]



Note. Authors, according to UNWTO

Conclusion

According to the collected data, it is evident that there are various programs available, but a different and holistic approach to sustainability is not apparent. Educational programs in the field of sustainability are highly important and continue to attract increasing interest from students annually. For countries like Georgia, sustainable tourism development, especially in mountains, is crucial. The people living in these areas face numerous challenges, and sustainable tourism development can serve as the primary tool for regional development. It has the potential to contribute significantly to achieving sustainable development goals, positively impacting the quality of life, ensuring decent working conditions, and fostering knowledge-sharing that is accessible to everyone throughout their lifetime.

As discussed, in the field of tourism, there is a wide range of bachelor’s and master’s programs. However, the Georgian academic program stands out for its direct focus on regional development, promising economic growth for the region and aligning directly with the goals of sustainable development.

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