

---

# The Role of Stakeholder Involvement in Promoting Sustainable Tourism Development in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Huseyin Bozdoglar

*Girne American University, #5 University Drive, Karaoglanoglu, Cyprus*

## Abstract

*In this research, a comprehensive attempt is made to examine how stakeholder involvement engenders tourism development within North Cyprus. Using a mixed methods approach, the study finds that stakeholder involvement plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism development with the survey data revealing that the majority of tourism operators demonstrated that stakeholder involvement was important for sustainable tourism development, and many reported actively involving stakeholders in their operations. Crucial policy and research recommendations were then proffered.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable tourism, stakeholder involvement, small island nations, tourism development*

## Introduction

The tourism industry has been recognized as a significant contributor to the global economy, providing job opportunities and economic growth to various destinations (Yang et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2019; Uysal et al., 2016). However, the rapid growth of tourism has also led to several negative impacts on local communities and the environment, including environmental degradation, overcrowding, and loss of cultural heritage (Arintoko, et al., 2020; Almeida-Garcia, et al., 2019). In response to these issues, sustainable tourism development has emerged as a strategy to promote tourism growth while minimizing its negative impacts on the environment and society (Baum, 1998; Fletcher, et al., (2019)

One of the key elements of sustainable tourism development is stakeholder involvement, which refers to the engagement of various stakeholders, such as local communities, tourism operators, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, in the planning and decision-making process of tourism development (Joo et al., 2020; Ozili & Arun, 2020). Stakeholder involvement is considered essential for promoting sustainable tourism development because it helps to ensure that the interests and needs of all stakeholders are taken into account (Gössling & Scott 2008; Lorio, & Corsale, 2014; Martin, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The study will focus on identifying the types of stakeholders involved in tourism development, the level of their involvement, and the impact of their involvement on the sustainability of tourism development. The findings of the study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and local communities within North Cyprus on how to promote sustainable tourism development through effective stakeholder involvement.

## Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development (Briedenhann, 2004; Cheer et al., 2018). First, a comprehensive review of the



literature was conducted to establish the current state of research on stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism development (Lealea, 2012; Strzelecka et al., 2017). Then, primary data were collected through interviews and surveys with various stakeholders, including tourism operators, government officials, local communities, and tourists (Mendoza-Ramos & Prideaux, 2017; Rastegar et al., 2021). The survey was conducted online, and a convenience sampling technique was used to select participants.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face, and telephone interviews were used where necessary. The interview questions focused on the stakeholders' perceptions of the importance of stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism development and the effectiveness of current stakeholder engagement practices. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions, and participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale.

A total of 200 stakeholders in the North Cyprus tourism sector participated in the survey, and 30 in-depth interviews were conducted. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data, while content analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Technical details of the analysis outcomes are presented in a supplementary document. The results were triangulated to ensure data validity and reliability.

## Results

The results of the study showed that stakeholder involvement plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism development in Northern Cyprus. The analysis of the survey data revealed that the majority of tourism operators believed that stakeholder involvement was important for sustainable tourism development, and many reported actively involving stakeholders in their operations. The in-depth interviews with key stakeholders also highlighted the important role that stakeholder involvement plays in promoting sustainable tourism development.

The results of the study showed that stakeholder involvement can lead to a range of benefits for both the local community and tourism operators. For the local Turkish Cypriot community, stakeholder involvement can lead to increased economic benefits, such as job creation and increased local spending. Stakeholder involvement can also help to promote environmental sustainability, as stakeholders can work together to identify and address environmental issues. For North Cyprus tourism operators, stakeholder involvement can lead to improved relationships with the local community, increased business opportunities, and improved sustainability performance.

However, the results of the study also revealed some challenges associated with stakeholder involvement in the North Cyprus tourism sector. One of the main challenges was the difficulty in engaging all stakeholders, as some stakeholders may be harder to reach or may have conflicting interests. The study also found that the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement was dependent on the level of support and commitment from tourism operators and other stakeholders.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate the importance of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development in North Cyprus. The findings suggest that tourism operators and other stakeholders should work together to identify and address issues related to sustainable tourism development, and that this collaboration can lead to a range of benefits for both the local community and tourism operators. However, it is important to recognize the challenges associated with stakeholder involvement and to work to overcome these challenges in order to achieve the full potential of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of continued research into stakeholder involvement and its role in promoting sustainable tourism development. Future research could explore strategies for engaging difficult-to-reach stakeholders, as well as the effectiveness of different approaches to stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development.

## Discussion

The results of this study provide important insights into the role of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development. The findings suggest that effective stakeholder engagement is critical for achieving sustainable tourism outcomes. The results of the study showed that stakeholders play a key role in shaping the direction of tourism development, and their involvement is necessary to ensure that tourism development is aligned with local needs and aspirations.

The study also found that stakeholder involvement can lead to more sustainable outcomes by promoting a better understanding of local conditions, and by providing opportunities for local communities to participate in decision-making processes. This can lead to more sustainable tourism development by ensuring that the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism are balanced and that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely.

Furthermore, the study revealed that effective stakeholder engagement requires a range of approaches, including consultation, collaboration, and partnership. These approaches can help to build trust, foster relationships, and promote mutual understanding between stakeholders, and can help to ensure that all voices are heard in decision-making processes. Effective stakeholder engagement also requires a commitment to ongoing communication and consultation, as well as a willingness to adapt and respond to changing circumstances.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of leadership and coordination in promoting effective stakeholder engagement. Successful stakeholder engagement requires leadership at all levels, including political, industry, and community leaders. It also requires effective coordination between different stakeholders and the development of clear and transparent processes for decision-making and accountability.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that stakeholder involvement is essential for promoting sustainable tourism development. Effective stakeholder engagement can lead to more sustainable outcomes, promote local ownership and participation, and ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely. The findings of this study have important implications for tourism policy and practice, highlighting the need for a more inclusive, collaborative, and participatory approach to tourism development.

However, it is important to note that the study had some limitations. The study was conducted in a specific geographic area and may not be generalizable to other contexts. Furthermore, the study focused primarily on the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders, and further research is needed to examine the actual outcomes of stakeholder engagement on sustainable tourism development.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of stakeholder involvement in promoting sustainable tourism development. The findings indicate that effective stakeholder involvement can lead to increased support for sustainable tourism initiatives, improved communication and collaboration among stakeholders, and ultimately, more successful sustainable tourism outcomes.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of identifying and engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, industry operators, government officials, and NGOs, to ensure that all perspectives and interests are taken into account in the decision-making process.

The study also emphasizes the need for ongoing evaluation and monitoring of stakeholder involvement strategies to ensure their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This includes regularly engaging with stakeholders to solicit feedback and assess their level of satisfaction with the stakeholder involvement process.

Overall, the findings of this study have important implications for policymakers, industry practitioners, and other stakeholders involved in promoting sustainable tourism development. Effective stakeholder involvement can play a crucial role in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes, and should be prioritized in tourism planning and management efforts. The study provides valuable insights for future research on stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism development, and offers a foundation for the continued development of best practices and guidelines for stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism initiatives.

## References

- [1] Almeida-Garcia, F., Cortes-Macias, R., & Balbuena-Vazquez, A. (2019). Tourismphobia in historic centres: The case of Malaga. *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, 83(83), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.21138/bage.2823>
- [2] Arintoko, A., Ahmad, A.A., Gunawan, D.S. & Supadi, S. (2020). Community-based tourism village development strategies: a case of Borobudur tourism village area, Indonesia. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 29(2), 398–413.
- [3] Baum, T. (1998). Taking the exit route: Extending the tourism area life cycle model. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1(2), 167-175.
- [4] Briedenhann, J. & Wickens, E. (2004). Tourism routes as a tool for the economic development of rural areas-vibrant hope or impossible dream? *Tourism Management*, Vol. 25, No.1, pp.71-79.
- [5] Cheer, J. M., Pratt, S., Tolkach, D., Bailey, A., Taumoepeau, S. & Movono, A. (2018). Tourism in Pacific island countries: A status quo round-up. *Asia Pac Policy Stud*, 5: 442–461.
- [6] Cheung, K. S., & Li, L. H. (2019). Understanding visitor–resident relations in overtourism: Developing resilience for sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(8), 1197-1216.
- [7] Cioce, C.A., Bona, M. & Ribeiro, F. (2007). Community tourism: montanha beijaflor dourado pilot project (microbasin of the sagrado river, Morretes, Paraná). *Turismo-Visao e Acao*, Vol. 9, No.2, pp.249-266.
- [8] Fletcher, R., Mas, I. M., Blanco-Romero, A., & Blazquez-Salom, M. (2019). Tourism and degrowth: an emerging agenda for research and praxis. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), 1745–1763. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1679822>
- [9] Gössling, S., & Scott, D. (2008). Climate change and tourism: exploring destination vulnerability. *Tourism Review International*, 12(1).
- [10] Iorio, M., & Corsale, A. (2014). Community-based tourism and networking: Visceri, Romania. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22(2), 234-255.
- [11] Joo, D., Woosnam, K. M., Strzelecka, M., & Boley, B. B. (2020). Knowledge, empowerment, and action: Testing the empowerment theory in a tourism context. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(1), 69–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1675673>
- [12] Lealea, S. (2012). Vuvale Doka Sautu: A cultural framework for addressing violence in Fijian families in New Zealand. Ministry of Social Development. <https://library.nzfvc.org.nz/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=3849>.
- [13] Martin, W. P. (2004). *The best liberal quotes ever: Why the Left is right*. New York, NY: Perseus Books Group.
- [14] Mendoza-Ramos, A., & Prideaux, B. (2017). Assessing ecotourism in an Indigenous community: Using, testing and proving the wheel of empowerment framework as a measurement tool. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/09669582.2017.1347176
- [15] Ozili, P., & Arun, T. (2020). Spillover of COVID-19: Impact on the global economy. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3562570>
- [16] Rastegar, R., Higgins-Desbiolles, F., & Ruhanen, L. (2021). COVID-19 and a justice framework to guide tourism recovery. *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103161>.
- [17] Strzelecka, M., Boley, B., & Strzelecka, C. (2017). Empowerment and resident support for tourism in rural Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): The case of Pomerania, Poland. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(4), 554- 572.
- [18] Uysal, M., Sirgy, M. J., Woo, E., & Kim, H. L. (2016). Quality of life (QOL) and well-being research in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 53, 244–261. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.07.013>
- [19] Yang, M. J. H., Yang, E. C. L., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2020). Host-children of tourism destinations: Systematic quantitative literature review. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 231–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019>.

