



# KONFERENCIAKÖTET

## Conference Proceedings

**Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia  
a Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe alkalmából**  
International Scientific Conference  
on the Occasion of the Hungarian Science Festival

**Sopron, 2023. november 23.**  
23 November 2023, Sopron

**FENNTARTHATÓSÁGI ÁTMENET:  
KIHÍVÁSOK ÉS INNOVATÍV MEGOLDÁSOK**  
SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Szerkesztők / Editors:

OBÁDOVICS Csilla, RESPERGER Richárd, SZÉLES Zsuzsanna, TÓTH Balázs István

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## **The Role of Mountain Tourism Activities and Facilities on Domestic Tourism Consumption in Tourism Destinations**

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### **Abstract:**

Mountain tourism is growing globally, second only to coastal tourism. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in international tourism, causing job losses and reduced government revenues. To ensure sustainable growth and improve citizens' wellbeing, many destinations promote domestic tourism. This paper investigates the role of mountain tourism activities in influencing domestic tourism consumption, focusing on economic dynamics and socio-cultural implications for destination management and policy formulation. More so, while there are many mountainous resources failure to diversify the mountain tourism activities for domestic market has led to declined consumption of tourism product by domestic tourists. This paper therefore explores the impact of mountain tourism activities on domestic tourism consumption in destination regions. It focuses on analyzing literature, case studies, and sustainable development through Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, Google Scholar, published books and reports related to the topic. The paper suggests sustainable tourism strategies for mountainous destinations, balancing economic benefits and cultural preservation, to enhance domestic tourism and promote responsible tourism development.

**Keywords:** mountain tourism, tourism activities, domestic tourist, tourism consumption  
JEL Codes: Q26, Z32

### **1. Introduction**

Tourism plays a highly significant economic activity in many destinations across the world. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism accounted for 10% of global GDP and 25% of new jobs (WTTC, 2022). It is frequently cited as a key economic activity that has the largest impact on the revenue and quality of life of an indigenous community in a destination. It promotes

economic growth by increasing revenue, employment, investment, and exports, as well as providing other vital benefits such as cultural heritage preservation, enhanced infrastructure, and local community amenities (UNWTO, 2010; WTTC, 2022).

While tourism provides several advantages to many nations, regions, and communities, including economic benefits, the fast rise of mainstream mass tourism has harmed the environment and local cultures in many locations (Neto, 2003). Depletion of natural resources and environmental deterioration are only a few of the consequences that many major tourist destinations face. Tourism has the most detrimental effect on natural resources, ecosystems, and local community cultures (Cobbinah et al., 2017; Gowreesunkar et al., 2022). Sustainable tourism and travel practices, such as ecotourism and responsible travel, should be developed to mitigate the effects of traditional tourism.

More so, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic had a negative influence on worldwide businesses, including tourism and ecotourism sites (Gowreesunkar et al., 2022). It resulted in a drop in the performance of the international tourist business in (Korstanje et al., 2022; UNWTO, 2021; WTTC, 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental influence on the tourist business, resulting in a 74% fall in foreign visitor numbers in 2020. This is because the pandemic caused travel restrictions, border closures, the closing of numerous tourist facilities, and a drop in consumer trust in travel (Korstanje et al., 2022; UNWTO, 2021; WTTC, 2021). This calls for an urgent need to address the detrimental impacts of tourism in destinations as well as caution destinations on the consequences of the fragile nature of overdependence on international tourism for socio-economic gains. Destinations are therefore seeking to achieve Sustainable development goals which provides a holistic approach in development.

Tourism has a great potential in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the mountains (Price, 2005). While it is acknowledged that conservation and sustainable management in these areas are two closely affiliated concepts (Tampakis et al., 2019), there is a need for adequate sustainable tourism policies, coordination of relevant sectoral policies, innovation in tourism products, sustainable mobility and tools for impact measurement (FAO & UNWTO, 2021). Mountainous forest areas cover almost 28% of the Earth's surface and therefore, development of mountain tourism in such destinations would catalyze the achievement of the SDGs. Recent studies indicate that there has been growing interest in mountain tourism in destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2019). Nature-based and mountain tourism have been identified as the major pillar for sustainable development in rural and mountainous areas, presenting new economic opportunities along with environmental protection (Tampakis et al., 2019).

Mountain tourism is currently one of the fastest growing market segments of tourism. It is believed to be second in the global popularity as tourist destinations, after coastal destinations, (Mieczkowski, 1995; Panov et al, 2013). More than 50 million people are estimated to patronage mountains annually (FAO, 2005). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2007) and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2004), statistics indicate that mountains attract roughly 15 to 20% of the global tourism market and generate annual revenue of 70-90 billion dollars. This growth presents excellence opportunities for destinations with mountain resources to tap for tourism development.

Many global destinations have prioritized mountain tourism for the purpose of raising the socio-economic welfare (Marić, 2002) of the local communities, biodiversity conservation, environmental conservation and cultural preservation among other benefits. Over 600 mountain centers have been developed in European mountain regions, out of which 70% in Alpine countries, which are visited by 60 to 80 million annually tourists. Austria, for example, is currently the 10th most visited country in the world, with over 18 million tourists per year, both in winter and summer, contributing to at least 10% of Austria's overall GDP (Holiday Services Austria, 2010).

Inadequate tourism product innovation, the multidisciplinary nature of tourism, lack of sectoral coordination, conflicting land use and tenure systems, natural disasters pandemics such as earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic, changing consumer tastes and preferences, climate change and inadequate tools for impact assessment contributes to low tourism demand, reduced biodiversity conservation and reduced and unstable local community livelihoods. This implies that there is need for development of alternative forms of tourism, adequate sustainable tourism policies, coordination of relevant sectoral policies, innovation in tourism products and sustainable mobility need for tools for impact measurement (FAO & UNWTO, 2021).

Demand and consumer tastes and preferences have also been changing over time. For example, the ecotourism industry has been characterized by a shift of demand to mountain tourism. This is because mountain offer an impressive array of tourist resources, such as spectacular landscapes of relief impresses through altitude, stunning cliffs, scenic ridges, and a variety of genetic types of relief; distinct activities (Slusariuc, Bică, 2015). This offers more and excellent opportunities for promotion of mountain tourism in destinations.

Mountain tourism has a great potential in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Price, 2005) due to many unexploited resources, increasing level of awareness on sustainable development, new technological development, globalization and increased mobility. Mountainous forest areas cover almost 28% of the Earth's surface (FAO & UNWTO, 2021) and a growing interest in mountain tourism in destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2019). Nature-based and mountain tourism are major pillars for sustainable development in rural and mountainous areas, presenting new economic opportunities along with environmental protection (Tampakis et al., 2018). Although mountain tourism has great potential for the achievement of sustainable development goals in destination, the influence of mountain tourism activities and facilities on domestica tourism consumption is not well known. This paper therefore seeks to find the nexus between activities and facilities and domestic tourism consumption. More so mountain tourism consumption by domestic tourists is still at infancy. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the role of mountain tourism facilities and activities in domestic tourism consumption in tourism destinations.

## **2. Methodology**

The paper focused on reviewing relevant literature relating to mountain tourism activities and facilities, case studies and related articles and their roles in sustainable development. The data was derived from Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journal articles, SciELO, Google Scholar, published books, and reports related to the topic. The study started with the identification of the data sources. The paper examines the direct and indirect contributions of mountain tourism to domestic tourism consumption, including tourists spending patterns, revenue generation, creation of employment and environmental conservation. To achieve the objective, the following questions guided the study. The study focused on studies and reports published in English. The study utilized journal articles, reports, and books related to mountain tourism. After the data sources were selected, the researchers were guided by the following questions to achieve the objectives of the paper:

- 1. What motivates domestic tourists to patronage mountainous regions?*
- 2. What is the effect of mountain tourism activities on domestic tourism spending patterns and local community's source of livelihoods and socio cultural preservation?*

### 3. Discussion of results and findings

#### 3.1. Motivation of Domestic Tourists to Patronage Mountainous Regions

According to recent research (Le & Le, 2020), there are multiple factors that motivate domestic tourists to visit mountainous regions. Not only do these regions boast stunning natural beauty and captivating landscapes, but they also offer a chance for individuals to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of city life. The abundance of outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, and mountaineering further entice adventure-seeking domestic tourists. Additionally, domestic tourists are drawn to mountainous regions for the cultural and historical significance they hold. Imbued with unique traditions and ways of life, these areas allow tourists to immerse themselves in local culture (Bulatović, 2013). Overall, the allure of mountainous regions proves to be a compelling drawcard for domestic tourists.

When it comes to choosing a travel destination, domestic tourists are drawn to mountainous regions for their exceptional blend of natural charm, outdoor adventures, and cultural encounters (Le & Le, 2020). The appeal is further enhanced by the convenient and well-developed tourism infrastructure and amenities found in these areas (Liu et al., 2018). Whether it be lodging options, transportation choices, or recreational activities, the availability of such facilities in mountainous regions greatly influences the motivation to visit for domestic tourists. Additionally, the level and quality of tourism infrastructure and amenities available in mountainous areas play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' overall satisfaction with their journey (He & Luo, 2020). This is because consumer preferences have evolved, resulting in a growing demand for sustainable and nature-focused tourism encounters. Rather than opting for conventional mass tourism, individuals now seek more genuine, immersive, and eco-friendly experiences (Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002). As a result, mountain tourism facilities that embody sustainable practices and provide nature-based activities are much more appealing to domestic tourists (Le & Le, 2020).

Over the years, mountainous regions have served as vital hubs for human sustenance. The livelihoods and ways of life of these regions revolve around traditional methods of utilizing natural resources, including forestry, mining, farming, herding, and commerce (Williams & Fennell, 2002). However, the economic effects of globalization have had a detrimental impact on mountain communities, leaving residents at a disadvantage and their valuable resources depleted. In the face of these challenges, tourism has emerged as a promising solution to stimulate economic growth. In response to this, mountain tourism has gained popularity as a way to generate revenue and provide opportunities for these communities. The development of various types of mountain tourism activities, from hiking and mountain biking to skiing and mountaineering, has seen substantial growth in the industry in recent years.

Mountain tourism holds immense potential for increasing domestic tourism spending in mountainous regions. This, in turn, can have a positive ripple effect on the local communities' livelihoods, creating new employment opportunities in key sectors such as accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, and guiding services. Moreover, in developing countries, mountain tourism can play a crucial role in diversifying the tourism sector and attracting more domestic tourists. Furthermore, the allure of mountain experiences can also attract international tourists, ultimately leading to an overall increase in tourism spending in the regions (Lun et al., 2016).

The emergence of COVID-19 as a global health crisis in 2021 sparked a significant transformation in the way mountain tourism activities and amenities are viewed and experienced (Zeng et al., 2022) by the domestic tourists. Notably, the restrictive measures imposed by countries worldwide as a result of the pandemic led to a significant drop in international tourist arrivals, jeopardizing the economies of destinations heavily reliant on tourism. Consequently,

there has been a noticeable shift towards domestic tourism (Zeng et al., 2021), with mountain tourism becoming a pivotal factor driving consumption in these destinations (Zeng et al., 2022). Moreover, a large number of local travelers opted for outdoor pursuits like hiking, skiing, and mountaineering in order to discover the stunning natural landscapes of their own country and steer clear of crowded indoor destinations (He & Luo, 2020). As a result, there was a significant surge in the volume of tourists visiting forested and mountainous regions, resulting in a considerable rise in domestic tourism expenditure (Cao et al., 2022).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought to light the crucial role of sustainable transport solutions in mountainous regions for the growth and success of mountain tourism endeavors (Zeng et al., 2022). Strategies like enhancing public transportation systems, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transportation like cycling and electric vehicles, and implementing environmentally conscious transportation policies have been identified as necessary steps for reducing the ecological footprint of mountainous areas (Sgroi, 2020). In fact, popular destinations like the Swiss Alps and the Rocky Mountains have already incorporated sustainable transport initiatives to ensure the accessibility of mountain tourism activities and facilities while also mitigating any detrimental effects on the environment (Zeng et al., 2022).

### ***3.2. Mountain Tourism Activities, Facilities, Domestic Tourism Consumption and Local Communities Source of Livelihood***

Mountain tourism activities and facilities play a significant role in domestic tourism consumption. This is because these facilities and activities offer a unique and immersive experience for domestic tourists allowing them to engage with nature, participate in adventure and recreational activities, and escape from their daily routines. Additionally, they contribute to overall economic development of mountain regions and also provide employment opportunities for local communities. Many tourism destinations have benefited from mountain tourism through the development and promotion of various activities such as hiking, skiing, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing (Zeng et al., 2022). These activities not only attract domestic tourists but also encourage them to spend more on accommodations, dining, transportation, and souvenirs, thereby boosting the local economy (Price et al., 1999; Río-Rama et al., 2019).

Destinations such as the European Alps, the North Cascades National Park in the United States, and Makalu Barun National Park in Nepal have successfully capitalized on their mountain tourism offerings, attracting a significant number of domestic tourists and generating revenue for local communities (Switzerland, 1999). These destinations have prioritized mountain tourism as a strategic development focus, investing in infrastructure and facilities that cater to domestic tourists' needs and preferences (Lun et al., 2016). For example the European Alps have established a well-developed ski resort industry that attracts millions of domestic tourists every year (Switzerland, 1999), the North Cascades National Park established facilities such as visitor centers, hiking trails, and campgrounds to cater to domestic tourists' interests in outdoor activities and nature exploration. Mountain tourism destinations in Africa include the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, and the Virunga Mountains in Rwanda, Ruwenzori Mountains in Uganda and the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, Mount Kenya, and the Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa, Mt. Kirimanjaro in Tanzania, Mount Elgon in Kenya and Mount Longonot in Kenya among others. These destinations have seen an increase in domestic tourism due to the availability of activities such as hiking, trekking, and cultural experiences that attract domestic tourists.

The impact of mountain tourism on domestic tourism in destinations extends far beyond economic benefits. Through a diverse range of activities and facilities, mountain tourism also plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and protecting biodiversity (Chakraborty,



2020). By offering a variety of experiences, these destinations attract more tourists to spend on accommodations, dining, transportation, and souvenirs, thus stimulating the local economy (Zeng et al., 2022). Moreover, the availability of these activities and facilities helps promote eco-tourism and sustainable practices, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity in mountain regions.

According to Xiao (2022), not only is mountain tourism important for economic growth, but it also plays a crucial role in preserving the unique cultures and traditions of local communities. By providing opportunities for these communities to showcase their cultural heritage, mountain tourism stimulates economic growth, values social and cultural heritage, stimulates the growth of service industries, and improves the overall quality of life. Additionally, it promotes sustainable development in rural areas through the utilization and preservation of local resources, the promotion of environmental conservation, and the development of a strong sense of pride and identity among the local communities (Liu et al., 2023). In this way, mountain tourism not only benefits the tourists, but also empowers and enriches the rural communities it involves. By intertwining ecotourism and sports tourism in underdeveloped regions, mountain tourism can be used to enhance the overall experience for tourists and invite them to connect with the beauty of nature, while simultaneously promoting personal fitness and wellness (Xiao, 2022).

A study conducted by Xiao (2022), indicate that mountain tourism has been recognized not only for its economic benefits, but also for its positive impact on preserving biodiversity and culture. Furthermore, studies conducted by Zhao (2022) have shown a clear correlation between the presence of mountain tourism and a rise in domestic tourism spending. In fact, Zeng et al. (2022) research supports the idea that tourists are drawn to mountain destinations precisely because of the distinctive experiences and array of outdoor activities they have to offer. As a result, these activities and facilities greatly enhance the allure of such destinations, ultimately leading to an increase in domestic tourism consumption. Xiao (2022) asserts that for communities residing in mountainous regions, tourism offers both economic opportunities and the chance to diversify their economies.

The government of Himachal Pradesh in India, for instance, has identified the crucial importance of a reliable transport system and all-weather roads to enhance accessibility to mountain tourism areas and bolster domestic tourism (Dornier & Mauri, 2018). These efforts have opened up avenues for local tourists to discover the stunning natural landscapes of their own country, participate in exciting outdoor adventures, and veer away from crowded indoor spaces (Zeng et al., 2022).

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

The focus on international tourism has resulted in a less attention to domestic tourism in many developing countries' mountainous areas. To alleviate this imbalance, promoting mountain tourism can effectively shift the focus back to domestic travel and boost spending in these regions. Moreover, the introduction of mountain tourism will open up avenues for mountain communities to expand beyond their traditional means of income such as forestry, mining, and agriculture. By actively participating in the new economy, these locals can generate a more sustainable and diversified source of livelihood.

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic from November 2019 contributed to decline of the tourism industry in the global. This therefore call for the urgent need to promote domestic tourism to curb the adverse consequences of uncertain future events that adversely affect the tourism industry. Destination managers and key stakeholders need to develop and implement sustainable tourism strategies for mountainous destinations, balancing economic benefits and cultural preservation, to enhance domestic tourism and promote responsible tourism development.

Domestic tourists and travelers have great opportunity to contribute to sustainable development in destinations. As travelers become increasingly interested in sustainable and nature-based tourism, it presents great opportunities for destinations to embrace this trend and promote mountain tourism activities and amenities that cater to these interests. One crucial step for agencies is to create a comprehensive database of tourism resources, accommodations, and information systems specifically tailored for domestic visitors. Additionally, fostering strong collaboration among members of the tourism industry is crucial in facilitating knowledge sharing, effective marketing strategies, and providing exceptional support to travelers. This study is based on literature review and therefore, an empirical study needs to be conducted to validate the findings.

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