FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN ASSESSING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL PRODUCT IN TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Egamov Sulaymonbek Jumaboy o‘g‘li
Master of the MM1-IQ-25 group of the
Asian International University
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Abstract: Tourism has become a strategic sector for many national economies due to its capacity to generate income, employment, regional development, cultural preservation, and international cooperation. However, the growing complexity of tourism requires more advanced methods for assessing not only economic performance, but also economic sustainability and social product. This article examines foreign experience in evaluating economic sustainability and social product in tourism through a comparative analysis of international approaches. The study focuses on the practices of the European Union, OECD countries, Japan, Türkiye, Spain, and selected sustainable tourism frameworks used by international organizations. The research applies a qualitative comparative methodology based on institutional, indicator-based, and value-chain approaches. The findings show that developed tourism economies increasingly assess tourism sustainability through multidimensional indicators, including tourism contribution to GDP, employment, regional income, seasonality, investment, environmental pressure, social inclusion, cultural heritage protection, community participation, and quality of life. The article argues that the most effective foreign models combine statistical measurement, policy monitoring, digital data systems, stakeholder participation, and sustainability certification. The results of the study may be useful for countries seeking to improve tourism governance, strengthen social product creation, and increase the long-term contribution of tourism to national economic development.

Keywords: tourism, economic sustainability, social product, comparative analysis, foreign experience, sustainable tourism indicators, tourism policy, national economy.

Introduction. Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the modern service economy. It creates direct and indirect economic effects, stimulates entrepreneurship, generates employment, supports regional development, and strengthens cultural exchange between countries. At the same time, tourism is highly sensitive to external shocks, including pandemics, geopolitical instability, climate change, inflation, transport disruptions, and changes in consumer behavior. Therefore, the question of economic sustainability in tourism has become a central issue in international tourism policy and academic research.

Economic sustainability in tourism means the ability of the tourism sector to generate stable income, maintain employment, support business activity, attract investment, and contribute to national and regional development without damaging social, cultural, and environmental resources. This concept is closely related to the notion of social product. In tourism, social product refers to the broader socio-economic value created by tourism

activities for society. It includes not only monetary income from tourism services, but also employment opportunities, public revenues, infrastructure development, cultural preservation, community welfare, human capital development, and the improvement of the country's international image.

Foreign experience shows that successful tourism economies do not evaluate tourism only through the number of visitors or total revenue. Instead, they increasingly use complex indicators that measure sustainability, inclusiveness, resilience, and social impact. Such an approach is especially important for countries that aim to transform tourism into a long-term driver of national development.

The purpose of this article is to analyze foreign experience in assessing economic sustainability and social product in tourism and to compare the main approaches used in different countries and international frameworks.

The objectives of the article are:

1. To clarify the theoretical meaning of economic sustainability and social product in tourism.
2. To examine foreign models of tourism sustainability assessment.
3. To compare the indicator systems used by international organizations and selected countries.
4. To identify best practices that may be adapted by developing tourism economies.
5. To develop scientific conclusions on the improvement of tourism assessment methodology.

Literature Review. The assessment of tourism development has evolved significantly over recent decades. In the early stages, tourism performance was mainly evaluated through quantitative indicators such as international arrivals, tourism receipts, hotel occupancy rates, and the number of tourism enterprises. These indicators remain important, but they are not sufficient to evaluate the real contribution of tourism to national development.

Contemporary tourism research emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach. According to the sustainable development paradigm, tourism should be assessed not only by its economic results, but also by its social, cultural, institutional, and environmental consequences. This approach is reflected in the works of scholars who study tourism economics, sustainable tourism, destination management, regional development, and social welfare.

The concept of economic sustainability in tourism is associated with several key characteristics. First, tourism should provide stable and long-term economic benefits. Second, it should support employment and income generation. Third, it should contribute to regional balance and reduce excessive concentration of economic activity in a small number of destinations. Fourth, tourism should be resilient to crises and capable of recovery after external shocks. Fifth, economic growth in tourism should not undermine the natural and cultural resources on which tourism depends.

The concept of social product in tourism is broader than the commercial tourism product. A commercial tourism product is a package of services consumed by visitors, including accommodation, transport, food, excursions, entertainment, and information services. Social product, however, includes the total value created by tourism for society.

This value may be direct, indirect, or induced. Direct value is created by tourism enterprises. Indirect value appears in related sectors such as agriculture, construction, handicrafts, communication, and trade. Induced value is generated when income earned in tourism is spent in the wider economy.

International organizations such as UN Tourism, the OECD, the European Commission, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council have played an important role in developing indicator-based approaches to tourism sustainability. Their frameworks emphasize the importance of data, governance, stakeholder involvement, environmental responsibility, and social inclusion.

A common idea in modern tourism literature is that tourism should be measured as a system, not as a single sector. This means that tourism assessment should include economic, social, cultural, environmental, and institutional dimensions. Foreign experience confirms that countries with advanced tourism governance increasingly rely on integrated indicators, digital monitoring systems, and evidence-based policy evaluation.

Research Methodology. This article uses a qualitative comparative research methodology. The analysis is based on international scientific literature, reports of international organizations, national tourism policy documents, and foreign practices in tourism sustainability assessment.

The methodological basis of the study includes four main approaches.

First, the comparative approach is used to identify similarities and differences between foreign models of tourism assessment. This approach makes it possible to compare the European Union, OECD countries, Japan, Türkiye, Spain, and international sustainable tourism frameworks.

Second, the indicator-based approach is used to analyze how different countries measure tourism sustainability and social product. This includes economic indicators, social indicators, environmental indicators, institutional indicators, and regional development indicators.

Third, the institutional approach is used to examine the role of public administration, destination management organizations, statistical agencies, private businesses, and local communities in tourism assessment.

Fourth, the value-chain approach is used to understand how tourism creates social product through the interaction of accommodation, transport, food services, cultural institutions, local producers, digital platforms, and public infrastructure.

The article is conceptual and analytical in nature. It does not conduct econometric modeling, but it provides a scientific comparison of foreign approaches and identifies methodological lessons for tourism policy.

Theoretical Basis for Assessing Economic Sustainability and Social Product in Tourism. The assessment of economic sustainability in tourism requires a clear understanding of what should be measured. Traditional tourism indicators mainly reflect market activity, but sustainability assessment must also consider stability, inclusiveness, resilience, and long-term social value.

Economic sustainability in tourism may be assessed through the following dimensions:

- contribution of tourism to GDP;

- tourism exports and foreign currency earnings;
- employment in tourism and related sectors;
- investment in tourism infrastructure;
- productivity of tourism enterprises;
- share of small and medium-sized enterprises in tourism;
- regional distribution of tourism income;
- stability of tourist flows;
- level of seasonality;
- resilience to external shocks;
- tax revenues generated by tourism;
- linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy.

Social product in tourism may be assessed through the following dimensions:

- number and quality of jobs created;
- household income generated by tourism;
- participation of local communities;
- development of public infrastructure;
- preservation of cultural heritage;
- support for traditional crafts and local products;
- social inclusion of women and youth;
- accessibility of tourism services;
- improvement of destination image;
- contribution to education and human capital;
- quality of life in tourism regions.

The key methodological challenge is that some elements of social product are difficult to measure in monetary terms. For example, cultural pride, social cohesion, destination attractiveness, and international reputation cannot be fully captured by traditional economic statistics. Therefore, foreign countries often use mixed systems of quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Foreign Experience in Tourism Sustainability Assessment

1. European Union Experience. The European Union has developed one of the most systematic approaches to sustainable tourism assessment. EU tourism policy emphasizes green transition, digital transformation, resilience, stakeholder participation, and sustainable destination management.

The European approach is based on the idea that tourism must be aligned with broader economic, environmental, and social goals. This means that tourism development is evaluated not only by growth indicators, but also by its contribution to sustainability, regional cohesion, climate objectives, and quality of life.

One of the important features of the EU experience is the use of tourism dashboards and indicator systems. These tools allow policymakers to monitor tourism performance across countries and regions. Indicators may include tourism intensity, seasonality, environmental pressure, digitalization, employment, accessibility, and regional dependence on tourism.

The EU model is valuable because it combines statistical measurement with policy coordination. Tourism assessment is not treated as a purely technical process; it is connected with strategic planning, funding programs, environmental policy, and regional development.

From the perspective of social product, the EU approach pays special attention to community welfare, sustainable mobility, cultural heritage, and local participation. This makes the EU model one of the most comprehensive examples of tourism sustainability assessment.

2. OECD Countries' Experience. OECD countries use evidence-based tourism policy frameworks that emphasize resilience, sustainability, competitiveness, and inclusiveness. In OECD practice, tourism is analyzed as a sector that contributes to economic growth, employment, service exports, and regional development.

A specific feature of the OECD approach is the focus on policy indicators. The OECD recommends that countries define priority policy issues and select indicators that help monitor progress. This approach is practical because it avoids the excessive use of indicators that are not directly connected with policy decisions.

OECD countries often assess tourism sustainability through:

- tourism contribution to national income;
- employment and labor market conditions;
- regional distribution of tourism benefits;
- business environment and investment;
- digital transformation;
- environmental sustainability;
- crisis resilience;
- innovation and productivity;
- inclusiveness of tourism growth.

The OECD experience shows that economic sustainability should not be measured only through growth. A tourism sector may grow rapidly but remain unstable if it depends too heavily on one market, one season, or one type of tourist. Therefore, resilience and diversification are essential components of economic sustainability.

3. Spain's Experience. Spain is one of the world's leading tourism economies and has accumulated significant experience in tourism planning and assessment. The Spanish model is especially important because the country faces both the benefits and challenges of mass tourism.

Spain evaluates tourism through national and regional indicators. These include tourist arrivals, tourism expenditure, hotel occupancy, employment, regional tourism performance, investment, and contribution to GDP. However, in recent years Spain has also increased attention to sustainability, digitalization, destination management, and social balance.

One of the main lessons from Spain is the importance of managing tourism intensity. In highly visited destinations, tourism may create pressure on housing, transport, public services, and local communities. Therefore, assessment systems must include not only economic benefits, but also social costs.

Spain's experience shows that tourism social product is high when tourism income supports regional employment, local businesses, cultural attractions, and public

infrastructure. However, if tourism creates overcrowding, rising living costs, and environmental pressure, the net social product may decrease.

4. Japan's Experience. Japan's tourism policy is closely connected with regional revitalization, cultural heritage, transport infrastructure, and high-quality service standards. Japan uses tourism as a tool to attract international visitors, promote local regions, and preserve cultural identity.

The Japanese experience is important because it demonstrates how tourism can support regions facing demographic decline. Tourism helps create new economic opportunities in rural areas, historical towns, and cultural destinations. In this context, the social product of tourism includes not only income and employment, but also the revitalization of local communities.

Japan places strong emphasis on service quality, safety, transport connectivity, and cultural interpretation. These elements increase tourist satisfaction and improve the long-term competitiveness of destinations.

In assessing tourism sustainability, Japan focuses on visitor flows, regional distribution, spending patterns, infrastructure capacity, local participation, and disaster resilience. The country's experience shows that economic sustainability depends on the ability to balance international demand with local capacity and cultural preservation.

5. Türkiye's Experience. Türkiye is a major tourism destination that combines seaside tourism, cultural heritage, health tourism, gastronomy, and urban tourism. The Turkish model is characterized by strong state support, destination branding, investment in tourism infrastructure, and diversification of tourism products.

Türkiye assesses tourism development through indicators such as international arrivals, tourism revenues, average expenditure per tourist, accommodation capacity, employment, investment, and regional tourism distribution. In recent years, more attention has been paid to sustainable tourism certification, environmental standards, and diversification beyond mass coastal tourism.

The experience of Türkiye shows that tourism can become a powerful source of foreign currency earnings and employment. However, economic sustainability requires diversification of markets and products. Dependence on a limited number of source markets or tourism types may increase vulnerability.

From the perspective of social product, Türkiye's tourism contributes to employment, small business development, cultural promotion, and regional infrastructure. At the same time, sustainable management is necessary to reduce seasonality and environmental pressure in coastal regions.

6. Global Sustainable Tourism Council Experience. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council provides internationally recognized criteria for sustainable tourism. These criteria are used for destinations, hotels, tour operators, and other tourism organizations. The GSTC approach is important because it creates a common international understanding of sustainable tourism.

The GSTC criteria include four main dimensions:

1. Sustainable management.
2. Socio-economic sustainability.
3. Cultural sustainability.

4. Environmental sustainability.

This framework is useful for assessing both economic sustainability and social product. For example, socio-economic criteria include local employment, support for local entrepreneurs, fair working conditions, community benefit, and visitor contribution to local development. Cultural criteria focus on heritage protection, interpretation, and respect for local traditions.

The GSTC model differs from purely statistical approaches because it is also used for certification and practical destination management. It helps destinations and enterprises evaluate whether their tourism practices meet sustainability principles.

Comparative Analysis of Foreign Approaches. Foreign experience shows that there is no single universal model for assessing economic sustainability and social product in tourism. However, several common patterns can be identified.

1. Comparison by Main Assessment Focus. The European Union focuses on sustainability transition, digitalization, regional balance, and environmental responsibility. Its approach is strategic and policy-oriented.

OECD countries focus on evidence-based policymaking, resilience, competitiveness, and inclusive tourism growth. Their approach is analytical and indicator-based.

Spain focuses on managing mass tourism, regional tourism performance, and the balance between economic benefits and social pressure.

Japan focuses on regional revitalization, cultural heritage, quality of service, and resilience.

Türkiye focuses on tourism revenues, international competitiveness, product diversification, and sustainable certification.

GSTC focuses on international sustainability standards, destination management, community benefit, and environmental-cultural responsibility.

2. Comparison by Indicators

Assessment dimension	EU	OECD	Spain	Japan	Türkiye	GSTC
GDP contribution	High	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
Employment	High	High	High	High	High	High
Regional development	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Seasonality	High	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
Environmental pressure	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Cultural heritage	High	Medium	High	High	High	High
Community participation	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High

Assessment dimension	EU	OECD	Spain	Japan	Türkiye	GSTC
Digital monitoring	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Certification	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
Resilience	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	High

This comparison shows that advanced tourism systems increasingly use multidimensional indicators. The most effective approaches combine economic, social, cultural, environmental, and institutional dimensions.

3. Comparison by Institutional Mechanisms. In the EU, tourism assessment is closely linked to supranational strategies, national policies, regional programs, and stakeholder platforms. This creates a coordinated governance system.

In OECD countries, tourism assessment is strongly connected with national statistical systems and policy evaluation. Governments use data to monitor tourism performance and improve decision-making.

In Spain, regional governments play an important role because tourism development differs significantly across territories. This allows more flexible destination-level assessment.

In Japan, coordination between national tourism agencies, local governments, transport companies, and cultural institutions is central to tourism development.

In Türkiye, national tourism strategy and investment policy play a strong role in shaping tourism growth and assessment.

In the GSTC model, institutional mechanisms are based on standards, certification, destination management, and stakeholder participation.

Key Findings. The comparative analysis allows several key findings to be identified.

First, foreign countries are moving from simple tourism statistics to integrated sustainability indicators. Visitor numbers and revenues are no longer sufficient to evaluate tourism performance.

Second, economic sustainability is increasingly understood as stability, resilience, diversification, and long-term value creation, not merely as short-term growth.

Third, social product in tourism is assessed through employment, local income, infrastructure, cultural preservation, community participation, and quality of life.

Fourth, the most advanced models combine national statistics with destination-level monitoring. This is important because tourism effects are often local and regional.

Fifth, digital tools are becoming essential for tourism assessment. Dashboards, big data, online booking data, mobile data, and digital surveys allow faster and more accurate monitoring.

Sixth, sustainability certification is becoming more important. Certification helps destinations and enterprises demonstrate compliance with international standards.

Seventh, foreign experience shows that tourism assessment must include both benefits and costs. If tourism creates income but also produces overcrowding, environmental degradation, and social tension, its net contribution to society may be lower than expected.

Discussion. The foreign experience analyzed in this article provides important methodological lessons. The first lesson is that tourism sustainability assessment should be multidimensional. A narrow economic approach may overestimate the positive effects of tourism and ignore social or environmental risks.

The second lesson is that assessment should be policy-relevant. Indicators must help policymakers make decisions. If indicators are too general or disconnected from policy goals, they may have limited practical value.

The third lesson is that local communities should be included in assessment systems. Tourism social product cannot be fully measured without considering the welfare of residents. Local satisfaction, employment quality, access to public services, and cultural participation are important indicators.

The fourth lesson is that tourism assessment should be dynamic. Tourism is affected by crises, market changes, climate risks, and technological transformation. Therefore, sustainability indicators must be updated regularly.

The fifth lesson is that international standards should be adapted to national conditions. Frameworks such as OECD indicators, EU dashboards, and GSTC criteria provide useful guidance, but each country must develop its own system based on local priorities, data availability, and institutional capacity.

For developing tourism economies, the most appropriate model may be a combined approach. This model should include:

- national tourism satellite account indicators;
- regional tourism development indicators;
- employment and income indicators;
- local business participation indicators;
- cultural heritage indicators;
- environmental pressure indicators;
- digitalization indicators;
- community welfare indicators;
- resilience indicators.

Such a system would make it possible to assess not only tourism growth, but also the quality and sustainability of that growth.

Recommendations. Based on the comparative analysis, the following recommendations can be proposed.

First, countries should develop a national system of tourism sustainability indicators. This system should include economic, social, cultural, environmental, and institutional dimensions.

Second, tourism statistics should be improved through digital data collection. Online platforms, electronic payments, accommodation registries, visitor surveys, and geographic information systems can improve the accuracy of tourism assessment.

Third, tourism social product should be measured at both national and regional levels. This is necessary because tourism benefits and costs are unevenly distributed across territories.

Fourth, tourism policy should include indicators of employment quality, local income, women's and youth participation, small business development, and community satisfaction.

Fifth, environmental and cultural indicators should be integrated into economic assessment. Tourism cannot be economically sustainable if it damages the resources on which it depends.

Sixth, international standards such as GSTC criteria should be used as methodological guidance for destination management and certification.

Seventh, tourism assessment should be linked with strategic planning. Indicators should not only describe the current situation, but also help evaluate the effectiveness of tourism policy.

Conclusion. Foreign experience in assessing economic sustainability and social product in tourism shows that tourism evaluation has moved beyond traditional indicators of arrivals and revenues. Advanced tourism economies and international organizations increasingly use multidimensional frameworks that combine economic performance, social welfare, cultural preservation, environmental responsibility, institutional quality, and resilience.

The comparative analysis of the European Union, OECD countries, Spain, Japan, Türkiye, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council demonstrates that the most effective assessment systems are those that integrate statistical data, policy monitoring, destination management, stakeholder participation, and sustainability standards.

Economic sustainability in tourism should be assessed through income stability, employment, investment, diversification, regional development, productivity, and resilience. Social product should be assessed through local welfare, community participation, cultural heritage, infrastructure, social inclusion, and quality of life.

The main scientific conclusion is that tourism can serve as a powerful instrument of national economic development only when its growth is sustainable, inclusive, and socially beneficial. Therefore, countries should develop comprehensive tourism assessment systems that measure not only how much tourism grows, but also how effectively it contributes to society and the national economy.

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