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Barriers and Policies Affecting the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism: The Portuguese Experience

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Abstract

This paper identifies and ranks the factors that hinder the implementation of sustainable tourism in a developing destination. It uses a Delphi method combined with Q-Sort technique with three rounds of ranking by experts and analyzes the results with the Kendall's W test. It finds that the experts agreed on the most and least important factors, such as the lack of long-term vision, the lack of clear definitions, the lack of integration into government policy, the excessive bureaucracy and the economic priority versus environmental priority. It also finds that the experts disagreed on the other factors, showing a variation in opinions. It compares the results with the literature and confirms the importance of long-term vision, government integration, bureaucratic reduction and clarity in policies for sustainable tourism. The experts became more aware over the rounds, indicating progress in addressing the barriers. It concludes by presenting some policy-making guidelines for a tourism destination manager.

1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism is a concept that aims to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, society and economy, and to enhance the positive impacts. However, the implementation of sustainable tourism is not an easy task, as it faces various barriers at different levels and scales (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). There is a need to foster tourism development that respects the future generations, the natural resources and the local communities (UNWTO, 2005). However, the challenges in changing the existing policies and practices towards sustainability reflect the complexity and diversity of the issues involved (Hall et al., 2013; Lopes et al., 2022). This study seeks to examine the causes of the barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism, and to identify the critical factors that hinder the effectiveness of policies and initiatives in various tourist destinations.

The study adopts an exploratory approach to gain initial insights and gather preliminary data that will inform the formulation of more specific research questions and hypotheses for further investigation. The study also adopts a multidisciplinary approach, which integrates insights from various fields, such as tourism management, environmental sciences, urban planning and public policy (Tosun, 2001). This will allow for a deeper understanding of the multiple dimensions of the barriers to sustainable tourism.

The research methods used in this study include a literature review, an analysis of public policies related to sustainable tourism, and questionnaires using the Delphi and Q-sort methods. The Delphi method, as described by Okoli and Pawlowski (2004), will enable the collection of input from tourism and sustainability experts from different parts of the world, and the identification and prioritization of the most relevant barriers. The Q-sort method, as highlighted by Worrell et al. (2013), will enable the classification and organization of the experts' opinions, and provide a more solid structure for the analysis of the results. The study will also use additional research methods, such as analysis of sustainable tourism policy documents, to collect primary and secondary data. The analysis of the data collected will be based on best practices and lessons learned from tourism destinations around the world, in the search for effective solutions and strategies to overcome the barriers identified.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Barriers to implementing sustainable tourism

The development of sustainable tourism faces many barriers to its implementation, which can include economic, social, political and environmental barriers. Dodds and Butler (2009) highlighted some of the most common barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism policies, such as low awareness and education about sustainable tourism, low stakeholder involvement and lack of adequate funding. In addition, sustainable tourism policies are often misunderstood or ignored by the main actors involved in tourism development, such as governments, businesses and local communities (Budeanu, et al. 2016; Neshat et al., 2021).

One frequent barrier is the lack of commitment on the part of the main players in the tourism industry, such as hotels and tour operators. Dodds and Butler (2009) argue that many of these companies consider sustainability as an additional factor that contributes to increasing profits, and therefore do not prioritize the implementation of sustainable practices. For example, companies may choose to use cheaper, less durable materials instead of sustainable ones, as this would result in higher production costs. In addition, many of these companies expect governments to provide financial incentives to adopt sustainable practices rather than being responsible for their own implementation.

Lack of stakeholder involvement is also a major barrier to implementing sustainable tourism. Hatipoglu et al. (2016) investigated stakeholder involvement in the Eastern Thrace region of Turkey and concluded that although there is a formal structure for involving stakeholders in the planning process, its effectiveness is limited due to a lack of resources and proper coordination. They suggest that stakeholder engagement should be more proactive, involving local groups and communities more to ensure that local needs and concerns are addressed and incorporated into the planning process. Nunkoo and Gursoy (2019). examined the relationship between political trust and residents' support for two types of tourism development: mass and alternative tourism. They found that political trust has a stronger influence on support for mass tourism, which requires significant sacrifices from residents.

Another significant barrier is the lack of awareness and education about sustainable tourism (Dodds & Butler (2009). Many tourism stakeholders, such as tourists, businesses, and policy makers, may not be fully aware of the concept and benefits of sustainable tourism, or may not have the necessary skills and information to adopt sustainable practices (McLoughlin et al., 2023). Many tour operators and tourists are not aware of the negative impacts that tourism can have on the environment and local communities, which can lead to unsustainable practices that

hinder the development of sustainable tourism. Thus, Waligo et al., (2013) argues that education should be provided to both tourists and tourism companies and operators in order to raise awareness of sustainable practices and encourage the implementation of these practices.

Regarding stakeholders' involvement usually leads to lack of coordination and collaboration. Implementing sustainable tourism may involve multiple actors and sectors, which may have different interests, goals, and agendas (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). This may create conflicts, competition, or mistrust among tourism stakeholders, and hinder effective communication and cooperation (Hall, 2011).

Finally, lack of funding is another common barrier to implementing sustainable tourism (Torres-Delgado & López Palomeque, 2012). Implementing sustainable tourism may require additional financial, human, and technical resources (Getz & Petersen, 2005), which may not be available or accessible for some tourism actors, especially small and medium enterprises and local communities (Caffyn & Jobbins, 2003). Torres-Delgado and López Palomeque (2012) point out that there is often a gap between the intentions of sustainable tourism policies and the financial resources needed to implement them. The lack of financial investment can hinder environmental improvements, the adoption of sustainable technologies and the formation of responsible management practices.

There are several causes that contribute to the existence of these barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism. First of all, the lack of strategic planning as pointed out by OECD. (2020), as this is often listed as one of the main causes of barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2009; Raad, 2019). They suggest that countries often do not have a clear strategic plan for the development of sustainable tourism, resulting in uncoordinated actions and a lack of focus on clear objectives (Butler, 2022). In addition, the lack of strategic planning can lead to conflicts between stakeholders, namely between the private sector, local communities and government authorities.

Dependence on tourism can also be identified as one of the causes of barriers (Altinay et al., 2007; Yolal, 2009). The authors point out that many developing countries rely heavily on tourism as a source of income and employment, which can lead to pressure to maximize the number of visitors and the revenue generated by tourism. This approach can have negative impacts on the environmental, social and cultural sustainability of the region and hinder the implementation of sustainable tourism policies. Another factor is the economic pressure that exists in the various countries, and which is a cause for the existence of barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism (Torres-Delgado & López Palomeque, 2012). They

argue that economic pressures in countries often lead to a greater focus on the development of short-term tourism infrastructure to the detriment of sustainable practices. In addition, the lack of financial incentives and support for investment in sustainable practices can discourage the private sector from investing in sustainable tourism.

Finally, there is the excess of bureaucracy, which is pointed out by several authors as one of the main causes of barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2009; Hatipoglu et al., 2016). The authors emphasize that the complexity of bureaucratic processes can hinder the adoption of sustainable practices, as well as the implementation of policies and regulations necessary to promote sustainable tourism. The lack of clarity and delay in bureaucratic procedures can discourage entrepreneurs in the tourism sector from adopting sustainable measures. As such, as pointed out by Dredge and Jenkins (2007) implementing sustainable tourism may depend on the existence and enforcement of appropriate policies and regulations, which may provide guidance, incentives, or sanctions for tourism actors. However, some destinations may lack such policies and regulations, or may face difficulties in applying them due to political, institutional, or legal constraints.

2.2. Public policies in Portugal

Sustainable tourism is a type of tourism that seeks to reconcile economic progress with the conservation of the environment and local communities The promotion of sustainable tourism is one of the main priorities of tourism policies around the world, and Portugal is no exception. In this regard, the country has developed several public policies for the implementation of sustainable tourism, in particular the Tourism Strategy 2027, the + Sustainable Plan 20-23, the Reactivate Tourism Action Plan, the PRR (stands for Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência - Recovery and Resilience Plan - which is a national program that aims to implement a set of reforms and investments to restore sustainable economic growth after the pandemic, and to enhance the convergence with Europe in the next decade) and Portugal 2030. The Tourism Strategy 2027 is the main planning document for the tourism sector in Portugal and aims to make the country one of the most sustainable tourist destinations in the world by 2027. Launched in 2017, the Tourism 2027 Strategy, with its emphasis on sustainability, is based on three fundamental pillars: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. In order to achieve these objectives, the strategy has defined several goals and actions aimed at promoting sustainable tourism throughout the country.

In the context of environmental sustainability, the Tourism 2027 Strategy aims to develop tourism with a lower environmental impact, promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies, the sustainable management of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity. As far as social sustainability is concerned, this strategy sets targets for fostering cultural diversity, respecting human rights, raising the skills of the population employed in the tourism sector and improving the quality of life of local communities. In addition, the Tourism 2027 Strategy implements a set of measures to promote the economic sustainability of the sector. These measures include increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations, stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship and diversifying the tourist offer. These actions aim to ensure sustainable and profitable tourism, contributing to the country's economic development without harming natural resources and local communities. On the other hand, the "Reactivate Tourism" Action Plan, launched in 2020 as a response to the crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, represents another relevant public policy for sustainable tourism in Portugal. This plan aims to support the recovery of the tourism sector in a sustainable and inclusive way. Among the measures planned are the promotion of local and domestic tourism, the upgrading and modernization of essential infrastructure, the development of training and qualification programs for professionals in the sector, and the encouragement of innovation and digitalization in the tourism industry. Another important public policy for implementing sustainable tourism in Portugal is the Turismo+ Sustentável 20-23 Plan. Its main objective is to promote sustainable development in the country by 2030. The plan was developed on the basis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and aims to contribute to the sector's response to the urgency of the sustainability challenges defined on a global, European and national scale, in line with the objectives of the 2027 Tourism Strategy and the sector's recovery policy following Covid 19 (Reactivate Tourism Action Plan).

3. Methodology

3.1 Delphi method

The Delphi method is an interactive research technique that seeks to achieve consensus or precision by consulting a group of experts in the field in question. According to Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) the Delphi method is defined as a process in which experts respond to structured questionnaires in several rounds, with the aim of reaching agreement on a given subject.

One of the potentialities of the Delphi method, as mentioned in the study by Rowe and Wright (1999)is the use of experts' experience to obtain reliable forecasts. By bringing together experts from different fields related to the topic under study, the Delphi method makes it possible to obtain valuable information that we would not otherwise obtain, even when there is a lack of initial consensus. However, the Delphi method also has a number of limitations. (Rowe & Wright, 1999) point out that the process can be affected by the individual biases of the experts. In addition, communication problems can arise throughout the various rounds, which can lead to different interpretations. Another limitation highlighted by Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) is the investment of time and resources needed to conduct the Delphi method. The process can be time-consuming, especially when several phases are needed to reach the desired consensus. In addition, the quality of the results depends on the careful selection of participants and the precise formulation of the questions. Linstone et al. (2002) state that this method is developed by setting up a panel of experts, followed by successive questionnaires and the consequent responses from the panel, seeking consensus on certain issues.

3.2 Q-Sort method

The Q-Sort method is a classification technique that allows participants to organize items or statements according to a predefined preference scale. As mentioned by (Schmidt, 1997) the Q-Sort method involves sorting items into a series of piles/tables, ranging from most preferred to least preferred.

One of the potentialities of the Q-Sort method, highlighted by (Schmidt et al., 2002) has to do with its ability to capture individual preferences and nuances in participants' opinions. By allowing each participant to rank the items according to their personal preferences, the Q-Sort method provides information about the different individual perspectives and preferences regarding the topic under study. Another potentiality highlighted by (Nowack et al., 2011) is the ability of the Q-Sort method to identify the diversity of opinions in a group. While the Delphi method seeks to achieve consensus among experts, the Q-Sort method reveals differences in individual ratings and allows for a more in-depth analysis of participants' preferences and opinions. However, the Q-Sort method also has some limitations. For Nowack et al. (2011) the interpretation of the Q-Sort results is subjective. This makes it necessary for analyses of the rankings to have a more careful understanding of individual preferences and the reasons behind the rankings made by the participants. Another limitation discussed by (Nowack et al., 2011) has to do with the fact that the Q-Sort method can be influenced by the personal

opinions of the participants. This is because personal preferences and subjectivity can affect the classifications, and this can lead to the results being less objective and generalized. Finally, understanding the Q-Sort instructions can also be a challenge, as mentioned by Schmidt et al. (2002). It is therefore necessary to ensure that participants clearly understand the preference scale and know how to correctly apply it to the items or statements in question.

3.3 Combining the two methods

Using the Delphi method and the Q-Sort method together can provide a more comprehensive and enriching approach to research and decision-making. Although the two methods are distinct, they can complement each other and provide valuable information when combined (Dias et al., 2022b). Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) highlight the possibility of combining the Delphi method with the Q-Sort method to obtain more in-depth results. Another application of combining the Delphi method and the Q-Sort method is discussed by Nowack et al. (2011). They study several articles with scenarios based on the Delphi method and highlight the importance of using the Q-Sort method to validate and deepen the answers obtained by the Delphi method. In this way, the Q-Sort method can help to identify divergent opinions and better understand the reasons behind individual ratings, which makes it possible to enrich the analyses and conclusions that come from the Delphi method.

In this sense, we can conclude that using the Delphi and Q-Sort methods allows for a more complementary approach that covers both consensus and general predictions as well as individual preferences and diversity of opinions. This combination can provide a more complete and accurate view of the phenomenon under study, helping to reduce the limitations of both methods and provide more valuable and reliable information on the subject in question. However, it is important to consider the guidelines and best practices presented in the articles studied when applying these methods together. In this way, the proper selection of experts, the precise formulation of the questions in the Delphi method and the clear definition of the preference scale in the Q-Sort method are key factors in obtaining more reliable and meaningful results.

One of the challenges observed in several academic articles is related to the premature conclusion of studies due to the low response rate, caused by the lack of active participation of experts in the panel (Konu, 2015). This situation stems from the fact that their collaboration is required in several rounds, including the analysis of the factors under study, which can represent a considerable effort on the part of the experts. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to

define which statistical measures are most appropriate to determine the existence of an adequate level of consensus and, consequently, the closure of the study.

Given that the aim of this study is to obtain a consensus among the experts involved in ranking the causes of the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism, the Kendall W coefficient stands out as the most appropriate method. This coefficient assesses the degree of agreement between the answers, i.e. the ranking of the factors by the various experts involved in the study (Pestana & Gageiro, 2008). The Kendall W coefficient varies between 0 (no consensus) and 1 (perfect consensus) Schmidt et al. (2002) with a high value indicating a general consensus among the experts regarding the standard used to evaluate the different elements.

The questionnaire was designed based on the research objectives and questions aimed at identifying the causes of the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism. Three key questions were formulated:

- What are the causes of poor stakeholder involvement in the implementation of sustainable tourism?
- What are the causes of the Portuguese population's low awareness and education about sustainable tourism?
- What are the causes of the lack of funding for the implementation of sustainable tourism?

3.4 Participants

The study followed the recommendation of Beiderbeck et al. (2021), who suggest that a Delphi panel should consist of between 5 and 10 members. Sixteen Portuguese individuals were initially selected based on their experience in the tourism industry and their ability to provide a comprehensive perspective on the sector. This group aimed to represent a diverse range of experiences and organizations, including both public and private sector representatives. However, despite repeated reminders, only 8 of the 16 individuals agreed to participate in the study. Despite this reduced number, the final panel was considered to be highly qualified and experienced due to their extensive work in the area of sustainability, both academically and professionally. Table 1 provides a description of the participants.

Table 1.

Description of the panel members

	Gender	Age	Experience (Years)	Organization	Position
Perito 1	F	45	18	University	Director
Perito 2	F	53	12	Private company	CEO
Perito 3	M	54	12	Private company	CEO
Perito 4	M	60	17	Public Administration	Administrator
Perito 5	M	45	9	Private company	Director
Perito 6	M	50	21	University	Professor
Perito 7	F	44	10	Private company	Project Manager
Perito 8	M	50	19	University	Professor

4. Results

4.1. First round of the study

Round 1 began on July 20th and ended on August 31st. The questionnaire was sent to 12 members of the initial panel, to which 8 responses were received. At the start of the round, the panel members were sent an email that explained the subject, purpose and procedures of the study. The panel members were also asked to suggest hypotheses that were not on the list. The questionnaire consisted of the 3 questions and 11 hypotheses mentioned above, and the expert panel members had to rank them, considering 1 to be the most important and 11 to be the least important (Table 1 Appendix I). Once the panel members' responses had been obtained, they were analyzed, leading to the final ranking of responses shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 (Appendix). The Kendall W coefficient used to determine the members' agreement in terms of ordering was

W=0.38 for the first question, W= 0.29 for the second question and W=0.36 for the third question, which shows a moderate level of consensus for each of the questions. However, by analyzing this coefficient, it was concluded that a statistically significant level of consensus had not been reached and a further round was drawn up in order to achieve a better consensus among the panel members.

4.2. Second round of the study

The aim of this round was to improve the convergence of opinions among the panel members regarding the ranking of the 11 factors of the topic under study. Previously, an email was sent to the panel members containing the list with the ranking obtained in Round 1, consisting of the average and points obtained for each factor. As such, the panel members would have more detailed information about Round 1 and could re-evaluate their answers in Round 2.

This round took place between September 4 and 18 and the panel members were asked to re-order the factors under study following the same ordering logic as in Round 1. Of the 8 panel members, 7 participated in this 2nd round. Once the panel members' responses had been obtained, they were analyzed, which led to the final ordering of the responses shown in Table 5,6,7 (Appendix III). The Kendall W coefficient used to determine the panelists' agreement in terms of ordering was: W=0.26 for the first question, W=0.11 for the second question and W=0.21 for the third question, which shows a relatively weak level of consensus for each of the questions.

In this sense, it was concluded that a significant level of consensus had not been reached, so another round was drawn up in order to achieve a better consensus among the panel members.

4.3. Third round of the study

The aim of this round was to improve the convergence of opinions among the panel members regarding the ranking of the 11 factors of the study topic. Previously, an email was sent to the panel members with the list of the rankings obtained in Round 2, with the list of the rankings obtained in Round 2, consisting of the average and points obtained for each factor.

This round took place between September 22 and 29 and the panel members were asked to re-order the factors under study following the same ordering logic as in the 1st and 2nd rounds. From the 7 panel members, 7 participations were received in this 2nd round. Once the panel members' responses had been obtained, they were analyzed, which led to the final ordering of

the responses shown in Table 8,9,10 (Appendix IV). The Kendall W coefficient used to determine the panelists' agreement in terms of ranking was: W=0.50 for the first question, W=0.57 for the second question and W=0.63 for the third question, which shows a relatively considerable level of consensus for each of the questions. In this sense, it was concluded that convergence had been reached in the opinion of the experts, so there was no need to carry out any further rounds.

4.4. Analysis of results

The participants ranked the factors that contribute to the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism in three questions. The Kendall's W test values show how much they agreed on the ordering of the factors.

For the first question, which asked about weak stakeholder involvement, the W value of 0.26 suggests weak agreement among the participants regarding the importance of the factors. Regarding the ranking, it was clear that a lack of clear definitions, excessive bureaucracy and a lack of long-term vision were consistently identified as the most important factors in both ranking rounds. This suggests that these issues are crucial to addressing the problem of insufficient involvement of stakeholders in the context of sustainable tourism. In both rounds, lack of qualification on the part of professionals in the sector and lack of political support were ranked as the least relevant, indicating that while they are still considered important, they may not be as pressing as the first factors.

For the second question, which addressed the causes for the existence of weak awareness and education about sustainable tourism, the value of W=0.11 indicates very weak agreement among the participants. As far as ordering is concerned, once again, the lack of long-term vision and the lack of clear definitions were considered critical issues in both rounds. However, the second round added the lack of integration into government policy as an important factor. Participants also considered the inefficient use of resources and the lack of qualifications on the part of tourism professionals to be less relevant, although they are still factors to take into account.

For the third question, which referred to the causes for the lack of funding for sustainable tourism, the W value of 0.36 also indicates moderate agreement. Here again, lack of political support and lack of qualifications on the part of professionals in the sector appear as the least relevant, while lack of long-term vision and excessive bureaucracy come top of the list. After

analyzing the two rounds of ranking the factors related to the causes for the existence of barriers to the implementation of sustainable tourism, both the most important and the least important, we can draw some important conclusions.

The third question focused on the causes for the lack of funding for sustainable tourism. The W value of 0.21 shows weak agreement among the participants on the ordering of the factors. The ranking of the factors revealed that the lack of long-term vision and the lack of clear definitions were the main concerns in both rounds. The second round also identified economic priority versus environmental priority as a critical issue. The factors that were considered less important were the inefficient use of resources and the lack of coordination between entities.

The factors that were in the middle of the table mostly kept their position in both rounds, indicating that they are persistent issues. However, some minor changes in the rankings showed a shift in the participants' perception of their relative importance. These factors are still significant in the challenges of implementing sustainable tourism, even though they are not at the top or bottom of the table.

In the first question, the participants consistently ranked "Lack of long-term vision" as the most important factor, and it remained in the first place in the third round. Another important factor was the "lack of holistic vision as an integral part of the system", which stayed in the top spots in all three rounds. "Economic versus environmental priority" and "excessive bureaucracy" were also seen as major challenges. However, the participants' perception of "excessive bureaucracy" improved slightly over the three rounds, suggesting that it may be less of a problem.

For the second question, "Lack of long-term vision" was the most important factor in all three rounds, in relation to the problem of low awareness and education about sustainable tourism. This shows that a long-term vision is essential to increase awareness and education about sustainable tourism, and that this vision has to be shared by political and economic actors, with the involvement of civil society.

The participants ranked the factors that contribute to the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism in three questions. The results show how their perceptions changed over three rounds of ranking.

In the first question, the participants agreed that a lack of clear definitions, excessive bureaucracy and a lack of long-term vision were the most important factors for weak

stakeholder involvement. These factors remained at the top of the ranking in all three rounds. On the other hand, the participants ranked lack of qualification on the part of professionals in the sector and lack of political support as the least important factors. These factors stayed at the bottom of the ranking in all three rounds. The W value of 0.26 indicates weak agreement among the participants on the ordering of the factors.

In the second question, the participants also agreed that a lack of long-term vision was the most important factor for low awareness and education about sustainable tourism. This factor was ranked first in all three rounds. However, the participants disagreed on the other factors, as shown by the very weak W value of 0.11. The second round added the lack of integration into government policy as an important factor, while the inefficient use of resources and the lack of qualifications on the part of tourism professionals were considered less important.

In the third question, the participants ranked the factors for the lack of funding for sustainable tourism. The W value of 0.21 shows weak agreement among the participants on the ordering of the factors. The ranking of the factors revealed that the lack of integration into government policy, excessive bureaucracy and economic priority versus environmental priority were the main concerns in all three rounds. The participants also ranked the inefficient use of resources and the lack of coordination between entities as less important factors.

The results of the study are consistent with previous research that highlight the importance of long-term vision, government integration, bureaucratic reduction and clarity in policies for sustainable tourism. However, this study also shows that the participants became more aware of these issues over the three rounds of ranking, which indicates progress in addressing the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism.

Coordination between the different entities appears to be one of the topics on which there is the least agreement between the participants, which is not supported by the study Nowack et al., (2011) where they carried out studies based on the Delphi method and emphasized the need for coordination between entities to deal with complex challenges. This may mean that the participants gave less importance to collaboration between the different entities to the detriment of the other topics.

5. Discussion

A consistent finding across the three questions was the critical role of a long-term vision in overcoming barriers to sustainable tourism. This aligns with the work of Linstone et al. (2002) and Dodds and Butler (2009), who emphasize the need for a long-term commitment to sustainable policies. A clear and shared vision provides a roadmap for sustainable tourism initiatives, enabling stakeholders to align their actions and resources towards a common goal. It also fosters a sense of purpose and sustainability among the tourism community, encouraging long-term investments in sustainable practices.

The study underscores the importance of government integration in promoting sustainable tourism. This finding aligns with the work of Hatipoglu et al. (2016) and Raad (2019), who highlight the role of government policies in creating an enabling environment for sustainable tourism. Government integration can be achieved through inter-institutional collaboration, which encourages coordination and cooperation among different government agencies involved in tourism policymaking. As defended by Broccia et al. (2022) it can also be facilitated through multi-stakeholder participation, which involves bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including government officials, tourism industry representatives, civil society organizations, and local communities.

The findings emphasize the need for streamlining bureaucratic processes and reducing bureaucratic burdens to facilitate the implementation of sustainable tourism policies. This aligns with the work of Altinay et al. (2007), who advocate for simplification of procedures and regulations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism policies. Excessive bureaucracy can create obstacles in obtaining funding, collaborating with other entities, and communicating effectively, as recognized by Dias et al. (2002b). By reducing bureaucracy, tourism destination managers can improve coordination between different stakeholders, promote a more holistic vision of sustainable tourism, and allocate resources more efficiently.

The study highlights the importance of stakeholder involvement in overcoming barriers to sustainable tourism. This aligns with the work of Nowack et al. (2011), who emphasize the need for coordination between entities to address complex challenges. Stakeholder involvement can be achieved through various mechanisms, such as stakeholder consultations, workshops, and focus groups. By involving a diverse range of stakeholders, tourism destination managers can gain a deeper understanding of local needs, concerns, and aspirations. As argued by Roxas

et al. (2020) This can lead to the development of more effective and sustainable tourism policies that are tailored to the specific context of the destination (Rasoolimanesh, et al. 2023).

The study identifies the need to address the lack of awareness and education about sustainable tourism as a key barrier to its implementation. This aligns with the work of Nowack et al. (2011) and Tölkes (2020) who emphasize the importance of awareness-raising campaigns and education programs. By raising awareness about the benefits of sustainable tourism and the importance of responsible tourism practices, tourism destination managers can encourage tourists, businesses, and local communities to adopt sustainable behaviors.

The study highlights the need for financial support to implement sustainable tourism initiatives. This aligns with the work of Torres-Delgado and López Palomeque (2012), who advocate for government funding to support sustainable tourism development. Financial support can be used to fund research and development, training programs, infrastructure development, and marketing campaigns. As identified by Maxim (2015), by providing financial resources, tourism destination managers can create a more conducive environment for sustainable tourism practices to flourish.

The study emphasizes the need to improve coordination between different entities involved in sustainable tourism. This aligns with the work of Hatipoglu et al. (2016) and Dias et al. (2022a) who highlight the importance of collaboration among government agencies, private sector, NGOs, and local communities. By improving coordination, tourism destination managers can break down silos, share knowledge and resources, and work together to achieve common goals. This can lead to more effective and sustainable tourism policies that benefit all stakeholders.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Theoretical implications

This study investigated the underlying causes of the barriers that prevent the effective implementation of sustainable tourism. Using a multidisciplinary approach based on previous studies, it examined various factors and challenges that influence this implementation in different contexts and locations. The analysis of the data revealed significant findings for theory, which have implications for public policy formulation and point to future areas of research.

The findings of this study provide valuable theoretical insights into the barriers to implementing sustainable tourism. The identification of key factors such as a lack of long-term vision, government integration, bureaucratic reduction, and clarity in policies contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives. These findings align with existing theoretical frameworks and extend the discourse on sustainable tourism by highlighting the importance of stakeholder involvement, education, and funding.

The results of this research contribute to the theory of sustainable tourism by highlighting the importance of several critical factors that affect its implementation. In particular, the findings suggest that a long-term vision is essential to ensure the success of sustainable tourism initiatives. This aligns with the perspective of Linstone et al. (2002) and Dodds and Butler (2009) on the need for a long-term commitment to sustainable policies. The research also underlines the importance of government integration, as discussed by Hatipoglu et al. (2016) and Raad (2019), as a determining element in overcoming barriers. Reducing the bureaucratic burden, as mentioned by Altinay et al. (2007), was identified as a practical measure to promote the implementation of sustainable policies.

6.2. Practical implications

The results of this study have significant implications for the development of public policies related to sustainable tourism. The findings highlight the need for a continued and deepened commitment to policy integration across different government sectors. This can be achieved through strategies that encourage inter-institutional collaboration, as recommended by Torres-Delgado and López Palomeque (2012), and through multi-stakeholder participation, as pointed out by Hatipoglu et al. (2016). More specifically, the guidelines for policy-making for a tourism destination policy-maker must be drawn along a clear and long-term vision for sustainable tourism. This vision should be shared by all the stakeholders involved in the tourism sector, including political and economic actors, civil society and tourists. The vision should also be integrated into the government policy, so that sustainable tourism can receive the necessary funding and support. A clear and long-term vision can help to increase awareness and education about sustainable tourism, as well as to overcome the tension between economic and environmental priorities. Another guideline for policy-making for a tourism destination manager is to reduce the excessive bureaucracy that hinders the implementation of sustainable tourism. Bureaucracy can create obstacles in obtaining funding, collaborating with other entities

and communicating effectively. A tourism destination manager should simplify the procedures and regulations that affect the tourism sector, and promote a more efficient use of resources. Reducing bureaucracy can also help to improve the coordination between different entities, such as government agencies, private sector, NGOs and local communities, and foster a more holistic vision of sustainable tourism as an integral part of the system.

To effectively implement sustainable tourism practices, tourism destination managers should adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the key barriers identified in the study. As such, they should establish a clear and shared vision for sustainable tourism by developing a long-term vision that articulates the goals of sustainable tourism for the destination. This vision should be shared among all stakeholders, including government agencies, tourism businesses, local communities, and tourists. Another recommendation is to foster multi-stakeholder participation by encouraging inter-institutional collaboration among government agencies involved in tourism policymaking. Create mechanisms for multi-stakeholder participation, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute their expertise and perspectives. Is also important that destination management raise awareness and educate the public about sustainable tourism. Awareness-raising campaigns and education programs should be developed to educate tourists, businesses, and local communities about the benefits of sustainable tourism practices.

6.3. Limitations and future research

However, this research is not without its limitations. Despite our best efforts to recruit more participants, we were unable to achieve a more balanced representation of both public and private sector representatives on the panel. This limited the diversity of perspectives within the panel. It is suggested that future research could deepen the understanding of the specific obstacles in different geographical and cultural contexts, considering local peculiarities. In addition, the research could expand to examine the practical experiences of implementing sustainable policies in different tourist destinations in order to provide more concrete insights into effective strategies.

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Appendix

Table 1: Example of a question from the questionnaire

What are the causes of poor stakeholder engagement?	
Excessive Bureaucracy	
Lack of political will	
Economic priority versus environmental priority	
Lack of long-term vision	
Lack of integration into government policy	
Lack of clear definitions	
Inefficient use of resources	
Lack of a holistic view of tourism as an integral part of the system	
Lack of coordination between the different entities	
Lack of political support	
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the industry	

Table 2: Final ranking of Question 1 in Round 1

What are the causes of poor stakeholder engagement?	Average	Sum*
Lack of clear definitions	3,44	31
Excessive bureaucracy	3,67	33
Lack of long-term vision	3,78	34
Lack of coordination between entities	5,56	50
Economic priority versus environmental priority	5,67	51

Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	6,11	55
Inefficient use of resources	6,33	57
Lack of political will	7,00	63
Lack of integration into government policy	7,44	67
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	8,44	76
Lack of political support	8,56	77

W= 0,38

Note: The column 'sum' corresponds to the total votes in each factor. By using the Q-sort technique the respondents were asked to order the factors by importance, as such, the first value (most important) corresponds to the proposed number of factors (11).

Table 3: Final ranking of the 2nd question in Round 1

What are the reasons for the low level of awareness and education about sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum
Lack of long-term vision	3,11	28
Lack of clear definitions	3,89	35
Economic priority versus environmental priority	5,33	48
Excessive bureaucracy	5,56	50
Lack of integration into government policy	5,67	51

Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	6,00	54
Inefficient use of resources	6,22	56
Lack of coordination between the different entities	6,67	60
Lack of political will	7,11	64
Lack of political support	8,11	73
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	8,33	75

W= 0,29

Note: The column 'sum' corresponds to the total votes in each factor. By using the Q-sort technique the respondents were asked to order the factors by importance, as such, the first value (most important) corresponds to the proposed number of factors (11).

Table 4: Final ranking of Question 3 in Round 1

What are the causes of the lack of funding for the implementation of sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum
Lack of long-term vision	3,33	30
Excessive bureaucracy	3,33	30
Economic priority versus environmental priority	5,22	47
Lack of integration into government policy	5,22	47
Lack of a holistic view of tourism as an integral part of the system	5,78	52
Lack of clear definitions	5,78	52

Inefficient use of resources	6,67	60
Lack of political will	6,78	61
Lack of coordination between the different entities	6,78	61
Lack of political support	8,00	72
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	9,11	82

Note: The column 'sum' corresponds to the total votes in each factor. By using the Q-sort technique the respondents were asked to order the factors by importance, as such, the first value (most important) corresponds to the proposed number of factors (11).

W= 0,36

Table 5: Final ranking of Question 1 in Round 2

What are the causes of poor stakeholder engagement?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round
Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	4,00	32	6
Lack of clear definitions	4,38	35	1
Excessive bureaucracy	4,50	36	2
Lack of long-term vision	4,75	38	3
Economic priority versus environmental priority	5,63	45	5
Lack of integration in government policy	6,13	49	9

Lack of coordination between the different entities	6,13	49	4
Lack of political will	6,25	50	8
Inefficient use of resources	6,38	51	7
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	8,88	71	10
Lack of political support	9,00	72	11

W= 0,26

Table 6: Final ranking of the 2nd question in Round 2

What are the reasons for the low level of awareness and education about sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round
Lack of long-term vision	4,50	36	1
Lack of integration in government policy	4,75	38	5
Lack of clear definitions	5,00	40	2
Excessive bureaucracy	5,38	43	4
Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	5,50	44	6
Lack of political will	5,75	46	9
Economic priority versus environmental priority	6,50	52	3

Inefficient use of resources	6,50	52	7
Lack of coordination between the different entities	6,88	55	8
Lack of political support	7,63	61	10
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	7,63	61	11

W=0,11

Table 7: Final ranking of Question 3 in Round 2

What are the causes of the lack of funding for the implementation of sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round
Lack of integration in government policy	3,88	31	4
Excessive bureaucracy	4,38	35	2
Lack of long-term vision	4,63	37	1
Economic priority versus environmental priority	5,13	41	3
Lack of clear definitions	5,63	45	6
Lack of political will	6,00	48	8
Lack of political support	6,00	48	10

Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	6,13	49	5
Lack of coordination between the different entities	8,00	64	9
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	8,00	64	11
Inefficient use of resources	8,25	66	7

W= 0,21

Table 8: Final ranking of Question 1 in Round 3

What are the causes of poor stakeholder engagement?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round	Ordination 2nd Round	Ordination Round 3
Lack of a long-term vision	2,50	20	3	4	1
Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the System	2,88	23	6	1	2
Economic priority versus environmental priority	4,50	36	5	5	3
Excessive bureaucracy	5,00	40	2	3	4
Lack of political will	5,13	41	8	8	5
Lack of clear definitions	5,88	47	1	2	6
Lack of integration in government policy	6,50	52	9	6	7
Lack of coordination between the different entities	6,63	53	4	7	8
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	8,00	64	10	10	9

	Average	Sum			
Inefficient use of resources	9,13	73	7	9	10
Lack of political support	9,88	79	11	11	11

W= 0,50

Table 9: Final ranking of Question 2 in Round 3

What are the reasons for the low level of awareness and education about sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round	Ordination 2nd Round	Ordination Round 3
Lack of a long-term vision	2,25	18	1	1	1
Excessive bureaucracy	3,75	30	4	4	2
Economic priority versus environmental priority	3,75	30	3	7	3
Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of the system	4,38	35	6	5	4
Lack of integration in government policy	5,25	42	5	2	5
Inefficient use of resources	5,25	42	7	8	6
Lack of political support	6,63	53	10	10	7
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	7,50	60	11	11	8
Lack of clear definitions	8,00	64	2	3	9
Lack of political will	8,63	69	9	6	10

Lack of coordination between the different entities	10,63	85	8	9	11

W=0,57

Table 10: Final ranking of Question 3 in Round 3

What are the causes of the lack of funding for the implementation of sustainable tourism?	Average	Sum	Ordination 1st Round	Ordination 2nd Round	Ordination Round 3
Lack of integration in government policy	2,38	19	4	1	1
Excessive bureaucracy	2,75	22	2	2	2
Economic priority versus environmental priority	3,50	28	3	4	3
Lack of long-term vision	3,88	31	1	3	4
Lack of political will	5,13	41	8	6	5
Lack of clear definitions	5,75	46	6	5	6
Lack of political support	7,50	60	10	7	7
Lack of a holistic vision as an integral part of government	7,50	66	5	8	8
Lack of coordination between the different entities	8,25	66	9	9	9
Inefficient use of resources	8,88	71	7	11	10
Lack of qualifications among professionals in the sector	9,50	76	11	10	11

W=0,63