

# **Governance of Green Tourism and Sustainable Development: Towards Greening the Economy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tourism is currently experiencing rapid growth on a global scale. It has a broad and significant impact on social, economic and environmental development of every state or region in the world. The environmental impacts of tourism warrant consideration, as the industry is not only dependant on the natural environment for much of its success, but it can also significantly alter the natural environment. Developed countries have experienced an increasing intensity of tourism and leisure activities in recent years which have resulted in them taking significant measures to control tourism in order to ensure the sustainability of the environment. By contrast, developing and emerging economies which have weak institutional structures, political instability and inegalitarian social and economic structures, have faced difficulties in incorporating sustainability principles in their governance of sectors such as tourism which have great economic potential. This paper analyses the environmental consequences and challenges of tourism development in developing and developed economies with the aim of suggesting more effective environmental governance mechanisms that can foster green tourism development by prioritizing the involvement of both the public and private sector and the local community. The paper also examines how a local capacity development (LCD) model can support local empowerment and environmental development. The findings of the study will be important to government policy-makers, business, and policy analysts because it provides useful strategies aimed at incorporating principles of sustainability in the governance structure which can assist the tourism industry in moving towards the new green economy paradigm.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Environmental consequences, Institutional governance, Green economy

## **Introduction**

### **Background of the study**

The world is now in a stage of transition, triggered by environmental crises and vulnerabilities where maintaining sustainability in all development initiatives is crucial, not only for scientist and decision makers, but for long term survival of the earth system. The sustained period of economic growth experienced by developed countries over recent years caused many to think that the historically recurring economic cycles of boom and bust had perhaps ended (Bramwell and Lane, 2009). However, developing and emerging countries are mostly concentrated on economic development, although substantial debates (Liu & Wall, 2004), international pressure and country based sustainability campaigns are influencing policy makers to rethink development initiatives within the framework of a green economy. Instead of more opportunities bringing crises, opportunities built on sustainability principles can create a better platform of problem solving initiatives in business enterprises, production and consumption.

Tourism is the world's fastest and largest industry and studies predict its increasing growth. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that the number of international tourist arrivals has grown from 25 million in 1950 to 842 million in 2006, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 7%. This future growth is expected to continue. International tourist arrivals are forecast to reach 1.6 billion by 2020. Tourism is also a lucrative industry, with receipts from international tourism (excluding international fare receipts) reached US\$733 billion in 2006. World-wide, the average receipt per arrival is around US\$680. In addition, domestic tourism is of major importance in many countries. All of the above means that the industry is a significant sector of the economy of many countries. It also has a major impact on the management of many cultural sites and natural areas. Being a people-oriented industry, tourism also provides many jobs which have helped revitalize local economies and supporting global economic development. However, growth in tourism is now accompanied by many problems and difficulties, such as conflicting demands on limited resources (e.g. fresh water, beach access), loss of indigenous cultures, issues related to energy supply and waste disposal both in touristic and ecologically sensitive areas (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2010), which is detrimental to the goals of sustainability (Gössling, 2002a). In order to ensure a sustainable future it is becoming crucial to develop a strategic governance mechanism for tourism management and development that could fit with the current trend of economic development, as well as supporting ecological integrity and social interests.

### **Research aims**

The aim of the study is to suggest an environmental governance mechanism dealing with tourism around the world that will add to the current trend of greening the economy. Based on an extensive literature survey, the following research questions have been addressed, in order to achieve the stated research aims:

- What are the environmental consequences tourism and challenges of green tourism development?
- What are the significant impacts of greening tourism industry on environment, economic and social development?
- What could be the institutional strategy for the governance of green tourism?

It is assumed that environmental impacts of current trend tourism practices and major barriers will be identified, which will assist in identifying the policy and institutional management gaps inherent in the present system. It is also assumed that a combined strategic approach taken by government, private sector and local community based enterprise will help to restructure the present institutional architecture in tourism sector towards a sustainable future.

### **Research methods**

The research is based on reviewing relevant literature related to tourism, economic development and sustainable development. The study finally draw a roadmap to redefine institutional management strategy and develop a sustainable framework to reframe the policy action for a more integrated and coordinated action of government within a umbrella network of different stakeholders.

## **Green Tourism and Sustainable Development**

### **Green tourism**

Green tourism is a mirror view of sustainable tourism practices which takes into account the mutual needs of the ecology and environment, local people, businesses enterprises and tourists itself. It enables us to draw a framework of management and development, for both now and in the future. The aim of these strategies to develop a governance mechanism with a prime attention to reduce negative environmental and social impacts of tourism operations located in rural or urban areas of any country premises.

### **Environmental consequences of tourism**

Ecosystems are the essential life-sustaining basis for the majority of the Earth's human population. Human intervention is destroying the environment and degrading natural resources at an alarming rate, increasingly jeopardizing efforts to attain sustainable development and effectively alleviate poverty (Strasdas, 2000). While an avalanche of tourists has a positive impact on the local economy, such as modern mass tourism also brings about negative externalities such as congestion, decline in quality of life, low access to socio-cultural amenities and loss of local identity, to the extent that the sustainability conditions of a locality might be endangered (Girard & Nijkamp, 2009; Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Tourist activities impact directly and indirectly on ecosystems. For instance, coral reefs can be damaged through trampling, buying, or collecting reefs species (a direct impact occurring locally), or through increased water temperatures as observed during El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomena. ENSO phenomena have increased in frequency and intensity in recent decades (International Panel on Climate Change, 2001), which is likely to be a result of global climate change related to human activities including travel, an indirect impact occurring on large regional scales (Gössling, 2002b).

Gössling (2002b) discussed how present tourism activities occur locally or individually initiated changes in the global perspectives, such as changes in land cover and land use, energy use, biotic exchange and extinction of wild species, exchange and dispersion of diseases, and changes in the perception and understanding of the environment. Infrastructure (accommodation, traffic structures etc.) for tourist destination significantly change land cover especially in coastal zones. Land alteration is an important cause for release of greenhouse gases like CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, and NO<sub>x</sub> (International Panel on Climate Change, 2001), thus interacting with other aspects of global environmental change. Those impacts are not limited to the built area only, but the residual impact often goes outside the boundary. Such impacts are quite extensive in the developing countries because of cheap land price. For example, erosion rates in Bali, Indonesia is 2-7.5 m/year on the beaches (Wong, 1998). In the British Virgin Islands, the building of roads led to severe erosion and sedimentation problems (Macdonald et al., 1997). Energy consumption and emission of CO<sub>2</sub> in transport and destination places activities are considered to be the long-term impacts of tourism on the local and global environment (Table 1). About 40% of the distances covered in reforming countries are by car, 5% by aircraft, and 55% by other means of transport, while in developing countries, distances traveled by car are assumed to account for 20% and other means of transport are 80% (Gössling, 2002b).

Table 1. Global tourism-related energy use and resulting CO<sub>2</sub>-e emissions in 2001

Category	Energy use (PJ)	CO <sub>2</sub> -e emissions (Mt)
Transport (incl. ship, etc.)	13,223	1263
Accommodation	508	81
Activities	350	55
Total	14,081	1399

Source: Gössling, 2002b

Tourism activities are influencing export and import of species through international trade, transported by tourists or tourist enterprise, thus contributes to the extinction of species through disturbance, collection, alteration of habitat, and trading of animal and plant species especially coral reefs as souvenirs. It was estimated that about 12,000 flowering plants have been imported to Europe, out of which 687 have become naturalized (Sukopp, 2001). Locally, new species may contribute to an increase in species numbers, but from a global perspective transfer leads to the homogenization of the plant kingdom (Sukopp, 2001). Leisure-related transport of alien species can also significantly change the host species location and cause the destruction of native species. In the same way, tourism can contribute in different ways to the exchange and dispersion of pathogens and diseases from tropics to temperate and vice versa. In addition to these above impacts, local culture, tradition and ethnicity is significantly influenced by the incoming of outsiders and also creates local unemployment problem through bringing skilled stuffs from outsiders to run tourism activities.

Tourism, particularly nature tourism, is believed to foster environmental consciousness and to result in an increased knowledge about the environment. However, while such changes of the perception and understanding of the environment have generally been understood as supportive of sustainable development, it is argued here that they may not necessarily lead to changes in attitudes and more environmentally friendly behavior. In fact, there is some evidence that a paradoxical situation occurs: even though the knowledge about the environment may increase among travelers, personal behavior may be characterized by increased resource consumption (Gössling, 2002a).

### **Linking green tourism and sustainable development**

Since the introduction of the concept of sustainable development, it has been analyzed and discussed in the activities mostly related to economic development to support the survival of the earth in the coming future. The tourism sector is increasing steadily, and will likely become one of the largest economic sectors in our modern open global economy. Its importance has increased over the past decades, as a consequence of the rise in spending power of increasingly mobile consumers and households, the increasing accessibility of tourist regions or cities all over the world, the emergence of relatively cheap transport modes, and the changes in lifestyles and trend towards internationalization in modern societies (Girard & Nijkamp, 2009). These impacts occur because tourism, both international and domestic, brings about an intermingling of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and also a considerable spatial redistribution of spending power, which has a significant impact on the economy of the destination (Archer et. al., 2005).

It is clearly found that the activity creates impacts and consequences, which we cannot prevent or stop because of running economic gain. However, this does not mean that we

cannot plan and manage the activity in order to minimize the negative impacts and accentuate the positive impacts of tourism. The importance of sustainability can be addressed as an integrating paradigm when considering relationships between tourism and the natural environment (Throsby, 2009), and in this century tourism must be redesigned with the changing global relationships and social structures, technological innovations, growing spatial awareness and environmental concern (Pigram & Wahab, 1997) and integration of environmental activities into the broader development framework is at the heart of MDG seven on achieving environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2000). In fact, the issue of tourism was not included in Our Common Future (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), but since the Earth Summit in 1992, pressure has grown for the tourism industry to lift its environmental performance in common with other economic sectors (Pigram & Wahab, 1997), mobility towards green tourism development in every corner of the world. In addition to the three principles of sustainability viz., environment, economic and social, cultural sustainability is an important issue, particularly when the tourism practices in a certain location are based on local or indigenous culture and tradition. Although sustainable tourism development on a global scale remains a telic concept, the journey toward the goal of sustainability is vital for current and future economic, ecological, and socio-cultural well being (Murphy & Price, 2005) and should be integrated with community-based economics, conservation with equity, and integration of the environment with the economy (Figure 1).

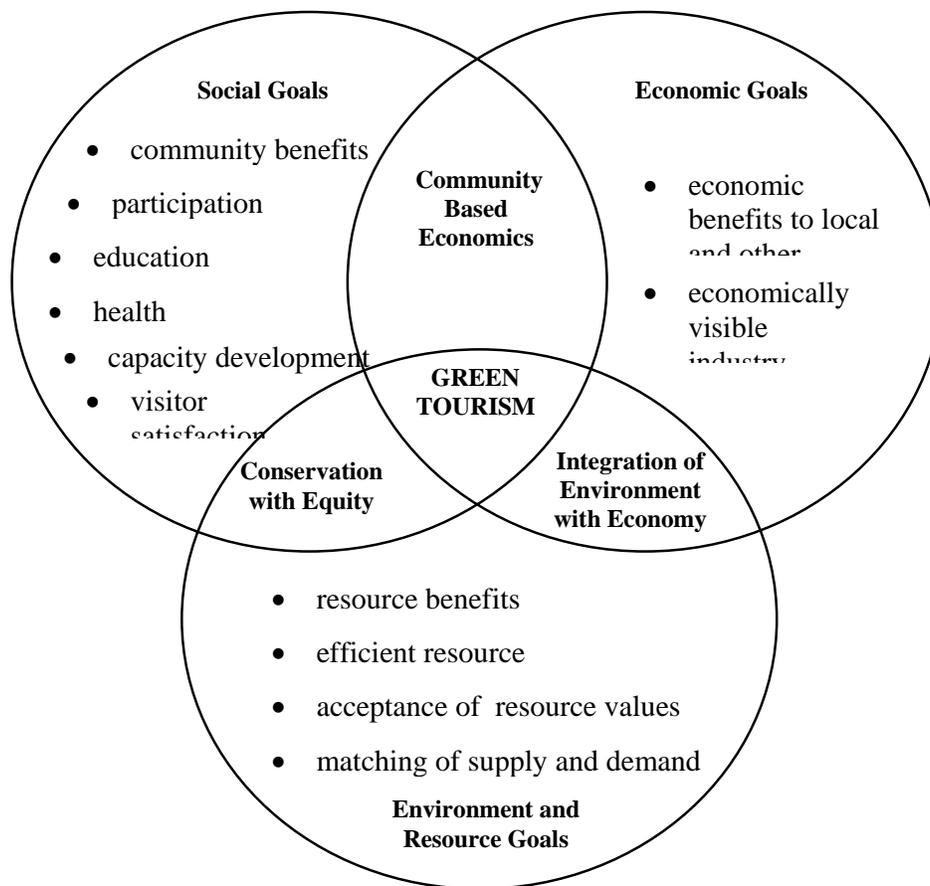


Figure 1. A model of green tourism values and principles (adapted from Hall et al., 1997)

### **Challenges towards green tourism development**

Prior literature suggests that majority of leisure-related travel takes place in the industrialized nations (Gössling, 2002b). However, people's tourism preferences are diversified, and they keep moving to new places in the developing world as well. However, few developed nations pay attention to sustainability by in awareness raising, energy consumption pattern, certification schemes, mobility and waste management sector to support green tourism initiative. This problem is exacerbated in developing nations: despite the potential scope of economic empowering opportunities through green tourism development, most of the emerging and developing countries are still far beyond the desired goal to sustainability. Many developing and emerging countries are suffering generally from external indebtedness, scarcity of foreign currency earnings, under-utilization of some of their major resources, comparatively disadvantageous exports, inadequate development finance and poor quality of life (Wahad, 1997). Weak institutional frameworks and bureaucratic structures, lack of strong policy initiatives, political instability and inadequate citizen understanding of environmental concern are also the major challenges towards green tourism. By contrast, although having strategic importance in their economic futures and supportive policies, green growth of tourism in developed countries is confronted by challenges that affect the ability of the industry to receive favorable policy attention from governments that limit the ability of tourism business managers to make informed decisions and that influence (Smith, 1997). In both countries, how these challenges are addressed will strongly influence the function of tourism as a green economic industry.

### **Areas of concern: resources conservation and mitigation of climate change**

Tourism induced land use change, climate change, biotic exchange, atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) increase, and nitrogen deposition as the most important factors that will lead to the loss of ecosystems and biodiversity in the future (Sala et al., 2000). It is found that in the same way tourism has drastic impacts on an ecosystem; on the flipside it makes a great contribution to economic development, resources conservation and climate change mitigation. Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide, representing 7% of the total worldwide export of goods and services and approach depends on the conservation of natural landscapes and wildlife, and using ecosystems in this way promotes both human well-being and biodiversity conservation (Christ et. al., 2003).

Many tourist destinations are highly vulnerable to climate change, because they are commonly located in small island states and coastal areas. This means climate policies to reduce the number of travellers and changes in consumption pattern can reduce the effect of climate change. However, the issue of reducing travelers was counterproductive to development of economies of the developing world in Bali conference (Becken, 2008) but adaptation fund schemes in Copenhagen may help to implement more adaptation project in tourist destinations and efficient energy use in transport and accommodation will foster climate change mitigation.

### **Governance Mechanism: Green Tourism**

#### **Institutional governance: state action and certification**

In the tourism sector, especially in developing and emerging countries, the governance arena has only tangentially been addressed, and environmental policy-making has relied on traditional policy prescriptions, where public administrations are assumed to play a crucial role as central planners (Blanco, 2009). For example, the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation

(BPC) is the national tourism organization under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, responsible to promote the tourism industry of the country. There were many objectives declared by the National Tourism Policy 1992 with a view to positively change the socio-economic condition of the country. However, BPC have experienced a lack of manpower, power to take decision-making, lack of inter-ministerial coordination and budgetary constraints often make it difficult to proceed with the goal sustainable resources utilization and adequate infrastructure development.

Tourism-related coherent policy conception and plans, formulation and implementation are not well structured in most of the developing countries (Wahab, 1997), and have not generally met the expectations of host communities, both because of the contents of the plans themselves and the ways in which they have been, or failed to have been, implemented (Liu & Wall, 2004). So a redesign of policy initiatives and their institutional governance structure should be the top priority in order to green the new development paradigm that helps to decouple economic growth from environmental damage (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2007). The active involvement of both public and private sector under the same umbrella is a crucial step towards sustainability in both developed and developing countries. Thoughtful policy making and planning can do much to minimize or even remove these negative effects (Archer et. al., 2005). Supporting strategies (e.g. government intervention, private initiatives and local capacity development) to action should prioritize in the policies and function of each actors, and implementation programmes should be clearly stated in the plan. Autonomous government tourism institution having expert groups and enough power to exercise may be restructured to act as network focal point with government and other stakeholders. Institutional strategies may include specifics of the tourism facilitation, investment incentives, development research, marketing research, priority tourism development areas and zones, marketing and promotional strategies in various niche markets including domestic tourism, air transport and cruise strategies, and tourism education and training strategy (Wahab, 1997) to achieve the policy's goals and objectives.

In addition to command-and-control initiatives, there is a wide range of alternative institutional designs for the governance of natural assets (Ostrom, 1990), such as market based instruments that can be combined with a regulated approach towards a hybrid mechanism of application to bring more efficiency in nature management and resources utilization. These could be tax reduction or subsidy for energy efficient appliances (solar power, compact fluorescent lamp, natural gas driven car) in destination places and transport sector, or in economic point of view to value environment through imposing travel cost for person driving to any recreational sites hedonic price of housing places for the benefit of living within easy access of an environmental amenity (Challan & Thomas, 1996; Ison et. al., 2002).

Certification and product eco-level schemes are one of the crucial steps for green tourism in the destination places. Many developed countries introduce these options in their common environmental governance strategy. A tourism institute can fix certain standards and procedures to allow certified companies, certified hotel and certified agencies or tour operator schemes, which will to support the competitive tourism investment by private enterprise. Certification schemes have been successfully implemented by countries like Costa Rica (Certification for Sustainable Tourism, 2010). By contrast, potential tourist destination country like Bangladesh and Nepal have neither certification programme nor eco-level schemes.

All the strategies here for green tourism should be implemented in line with the ideas of transparency, accountability and the rule of law to exploit the better performance under the mutual cooperation of different stakeholders.

### **Private initiatives: green investment and green jobs**

Although governments may have a range of powers and planning measures at their disposal to protect the natural environment, the commitment of the private sector to environmental protection is essential to enhance chances of success. The extent to which private organizations decide to take initiatives of environmental protection will be dependent upon their philosophy, values and available resources (Holden, 2008). However, to achieve a truly sustainable improvement of the opportunities offered by tourism for higher competitiveness and growth, many tourism initiatives must be fine tuned in order to guarantee an ecologically efficient development in an age with increasing volumes of tourists (Girard & Nijkamp, 2009).

Governments should open the floor for private business enterprise or tour operator's investment on a competitive basis, but their management should be regulated and monitored by respective tourism institutions. In this case, the private sector may wish to develop their own policies of operation, with priority given to analysis of the implication of sustainable operation, compliance strategies and codes of business ethics. These would form the key documents against which the tourism institute may audit these companies in order to determine whether they are really doing on the same way what they have written on the paper.

Thorough investment and government schemes of efficient environmental strategy will create millions of green jobs locally, nationally and internationally. In order to support local empowerment, consideration should be given to making it obligatory by government to recruit at least 50% staffs locally at destination private facilities and arrange required training facilities for them. In the EU, tourism has become a key sector expanding the economic base of destination areas, stimulating foreign trade and exchange, and favoring employment in many branches of the economy (Girard & Nijkamp, 2009). Tourism can be the driver of development in developing countries.

### **Local capacity development (LCD) through self-empowerment**

Community participation in decision-making process and direct involvement in tourism management and development is a key issue in ensuring acceptability of tourism, thus advocating ways to achieve sustainability (Wahab, 1997; Okazaki, 2008) through local capacity development. This derives not only from fair and just rules of democracy, but also from the fact that tourism should not expand at a rate beyond which citizens in a given community actually desire and can control (Wahab, 1997). Thus, tourism seems to be more effective than other industries in generating employment, opportunities and income in the less developed, often peripheral, regions of a country where alternative opportunities for development are more limited (Archer et. al., 2005, Tsaur et. al., 2005). Such growth can provide support to national economy and help to create market of traditional products. This paper suggests a local capacity development (LCD) model by community based enterprise in two sections of tourism management viz., accommodation service management and green/traditional product preparing and marketing, to support local empowerment and environmental development (Figure 2).

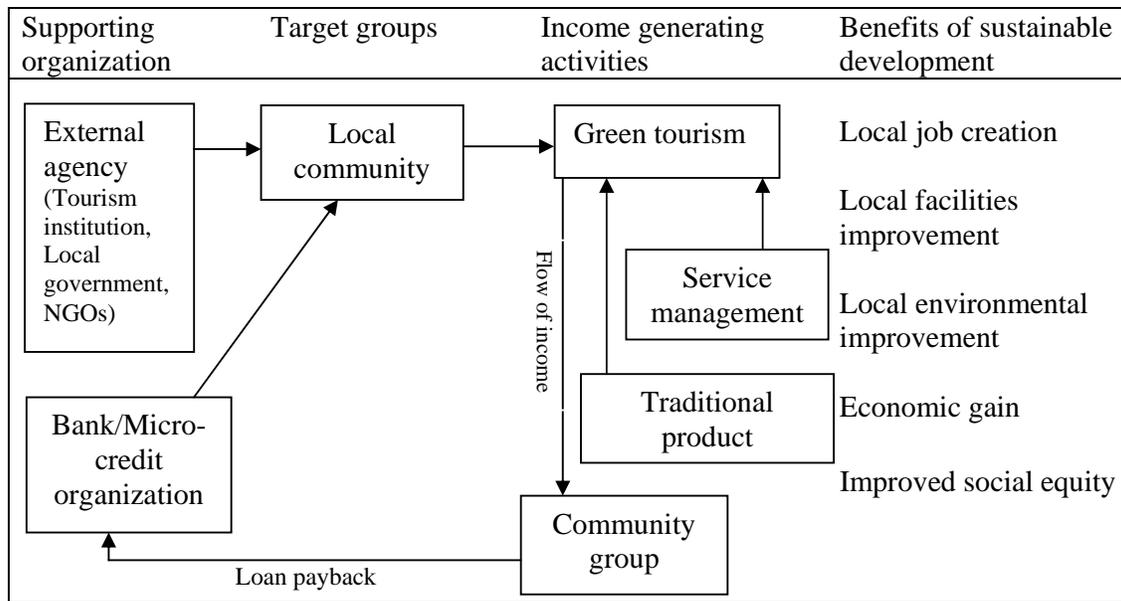


Figure 2. LCD model of green tourism (adapted from Biswas et. al., 2001)

Here external agencies such as tourism organizations, local governments and NGOs can provide all types of technical and institutional support to develop a community group responsible for managing accommodation services made by traditional materials, and preparation to market different traditional product of high market value. The community group can get financial support as a loan or SME loan from banks or micro-credit organization. Bangladesh is a good example of where organizations like the Grameen bank, BRAC etc have operated effectively, but presently these organizations only provide loans to individual persons in order to support small empowerment schemes. Further, these community business enterprises are not common in Bangladesh and most other developing countries. People now involved in traditional product making are selling their product to different shops in the city areas, and they are not well paid.

The proposed approach here seeks government action to encourage local tourism that might help poor community groups to sell their services and products. The earning from the business might help to empower local people and pay back their loans, resulting in final ownership of the enterprise. It will also prevent people from changing their livelihood activities through destroying or harnessing environmental resources. Economic improvement and community development will enhance tourism initiatives at local level and long term benefit to country's economy and environmental development.

**Network model: impact-governance-green economy**

The whole discussion of green tourism movement here represented by a connected loop of different action and associated impacts. Figure 3 here links how the socio-environmental problem runs by touristic activities influence decision-maker to thinking about the issue of sustainability through incorporating new strategies into policies and plans to support green tourism development. The strategies to incorporate regulated private initiatives and support to local community initiatives will draw a new roadmap to sustainable development in tourism sector around the world.

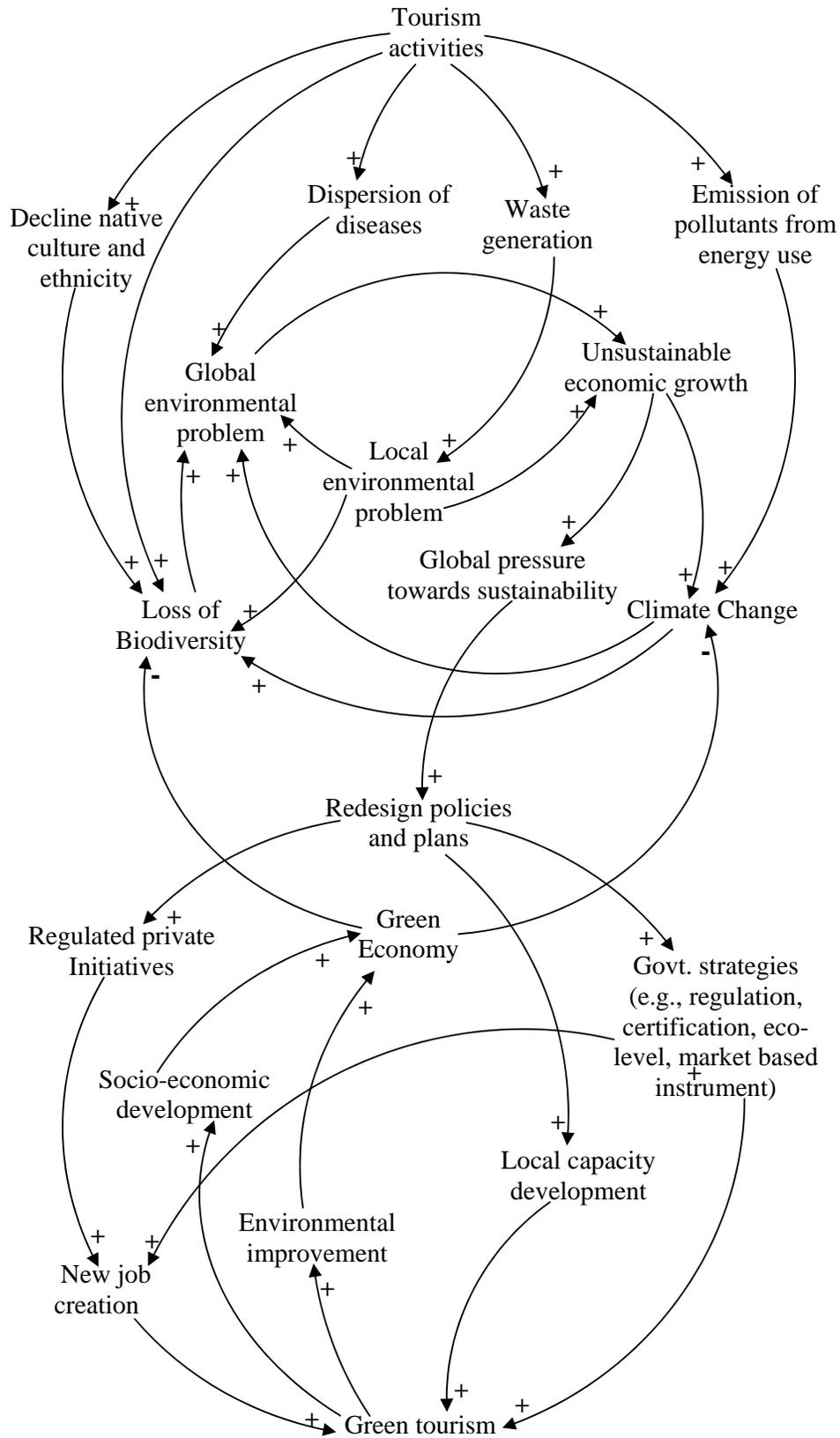


Figure 3. Governance of green tourism: impact to green economy (+ = accelerating; - = declining)

## Conclusion

Tourism, the world's largest industry and its role as a global employer and customer, are caught between global environmental change and economic development. Accordingly, it seeks integration of sustainability to enhance its potential benefit. Tourism may be self-destructive and often contributes to environmental degradation but there is scope to bring significant enhancement of the environment through sustainable strategic application in the management and development processes. The restructuring of the governance mechanisms of tourism management are in the interests of the industry, as well as being necessary to deepen the debate on sustainability and broaden the initiatives. To enhance green economic development, the strategies should address the existing problems from a social, environmental and economic point of view. The governance strategies suggested in this paper are simple and flexible, allowing the prioritization of a long term socio-environmental benefit and allowing the community to choose own vision and management decisions to support the tourism industry for sustainable futures. One major step forward to achieving a green tourism industry is to bring politicians, policy makers, planners, private investors, NGOs and community itself to raise the challenging issue, develop policy and management strategies, in order to support long-term benefits of residents and tourists without compromising the environment.

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